

MOTHERLESS INDIA

A tale relating the events liable to take
place, if unfortunately India attains
Swaraj.



BY
Norman.

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PREFACE.

It is not with the object of hurting the feelings of my Indian brothers, that I have written this book, but rather, to impress on their delicate minds the consequences and dangers of independent ruling.

Though this humble work of mine may have many drawbacks, yet, inspite of its shortcomings, it will still be sufficient, to convey to the reader a picture however imperfect and vague of independent India. Of course the readers must clearly understand that it is all a dream.

The readers must appreciate, that this work is totally imaginary, and is made humorous, in certain places, to lighten, and while away the dark hours of the reader. All the characters in this story are imaginary and no reference is made to living or dead persons.

In writing this book I have done my duty to my "King and Country".

DELHI,

NORMAN

20th June, 1931.

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MOTHERLESS INDIA

BOOK 1 INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I "A FORGOTTEN FACT"

IF my memory does not deceive me, I think it was in the year 1919 that Lahore, nay India, was in a state of great commotion.

Martial Law was declared in Lahore as a remedy to Non-Cooperation. Lately Mr. Gandhi had become a Mahatma and it was at this time that the Hindu Muslim question was farthest from India.

Swaraj! 'That dream of happiness,' was near at hand and every Indian boasted of it. Jallianwala Bagh¹ affair at Amritsar had inflamed every Indian soul to violence, just opposite to M. Gandhi's preaching. Woe to the man who was found alone in the streets in English clothes' for he never reached home safe. Either he was stoned or lathied². At Amritsar a "Sahib" Ticket Collector was caught by an infuriated crowd and an umbrella was forced down his throat till it reached his stomach. That Sahib was never seen again.

1. The name of a garden in Amritsar, where, a few rioters were shot down by the military.

2 Beaten with sticks.

In Lahore all the Mem Sahibs¹ had been taken to the Fort for protection and the Sahibs had been given rifles to shoot down, any rebels, having murderous intentions. Such were the orders of the Military Officers.

Orders of General Dyer, the Officer Commanding Lahore Circle, were daily issued and posted at every leader's house. Woe! to him that tore or tampered with it in any way, for he was caned publically. By virtue of these orders no one had a cycle, electric fan or stick left with him. After 8 p. m. every night, it was sure death or a public flogging at least to go about the streets, without a proper military pass.

At this time I was staying in Lahore with my mother and brother. Thank God! Our house was on the other side of the Railway Station, on Grand Trunk Road, near the Goods shed and we were outside the fire, or the city of Lahore. Consequently any fresh news reached us late. My school (for I was a student of the Cathedral High School for Boys) was closed on account of these troubles.

Thus I had nothing to do the whole day except reading and writing. Twice a day I had to take vegetableless and meatless meals, for the meat and vegetable vendors had gone on 'Hartal'² and refused to open their shops. Without good food and exercise, I soon became very weak and sick of that life.

It was one fine morning when a school chum came to see me and asked what had happened to me as I was very

1. European Ladies

2. Strike.

pale looking. I explained to him my difficulties. He told me not to be afraid of anything and that I could go out for a cycle ride at all times between 4 a. m. and 8. p. m.

After about an hour's chat he left me, determined to go out every day for an hour or so. Woe! he to me.

The next day, after having obtained permission from my mother and brother I took a cycle and went for a ride. It mattered little which way I went, but I think fate led me and I took the road to Anarkali, the biggest bazar in Lahore. Soon I reached it and found instead of the busy and hustling bazar, a street desolate and void of humans except a few sepoys posted here and there. All the shops were closed and every thing around me seemed lifeless. The dogs even did not bark, nor the birds sing and seemed to have joined the humans in preserving-silence. There was not a car or tonga or even a cycle on the road. The sentinals stood silent with bayonet fixed rifles in their hands, and looking like so many statues.

Silence! that wonderful property of nature is sometimes a blessing and sometimes a curse. But I may assure you that in this case it was far from a blessing. It was so terrible, that it would have stilled even the God of mirth or made a marriage procession look like a funeral procession.

To a hunter in a jungle, it would have been a blessing, but certainly in Lahore, the biggest city of the Punjab, it was a damned curse.

Well! I stopped and gazed at this awful scene and to tell the truth, it depressed my spirits and made me fearful. I

their Punjabi shoes on their heads to protect them from the April sun. Some wore shirts all tattered and torn and dyed in blood from their wounds inflicted, I suppose by a whipping, whilst the majority had no shirts. Regarding their lower dresses, they wore pyjamas¹ soorwalls² and taimats including longatas³. They walked bare-footed carrying their shoes in their hands or on their heads. Of such members was the crowd composed. They all had 'determined' and 'set' faces from which one could expect the least mercy. They seemed as though they feared not death or torture of any kind, nor feared to kill or torture anyone who came in their way. They were singing a national song by which they invoked God to give them the strength to drive out the foreigner and free them from slavery. It was accompanied by harmoniums, sitars and flutes, all playing false and going their own way, thus making a big row. Howling, whistling, crying and singing all combined in one. Some of them threw dust on their heads in token of grief whilst others beat their breasts with monkey-like mechanical movements. Some tore their hair, accompanied by others who inflicted wounds on their bodies, and all this they did to show that they were sorry for being slaves.

Nearly a quarter of this hostile army had passed me, when the attention of a Hindu was drawn to me. He was clean shaved including the nut and the eyebrows and seemed to be a messenger of death. He rushed towards me, others following him; With a short prayer addressed to God I prepared to face my end. Already through fear I was more than half dead. Just think a single man to face five hundred, without any weapon to defend himself. Oh! my God, How unfair and what cowardly foul play. Next the thought flashed to me that they would stab me. Yes I had forgotten how they would kill me for had I not heard of the cruel and inhuman ways in which they kill? I again prayed to God to call me to him peacefully at least not by being burned or drowned, because for these two ways of death, I had the greatest horror.

On they rushed and in another minute I was amongst them. With a last look to the heavens I closed my eyes, as I was being dragged in their midst. Suddenly my solar hat was snatched from my head and thrown away. Thank God I thought, they are going to kill me right here.

But why—what was this? I was not brutally murdered, but made to walk in their midst. Thinking they wanted me to change my ideas, or that some of them pitied me as a mere boy. I walked on with a sunken head. Had I known what befell me hereinafter, perhaps I would have tried to escape. But fate had not decreed so.

Well on I walked, how long I cannot say, but we passed the whole of Anarkali and took a turn towards the Zam Zamma Gun, that is the Municipal Gardens. From there

we marched straight up the Lower Mall till we took a turn into Taxali Gate. I began thinking whether they would let me off here, as due to such a long walk with them I must have become enough of a Swarajist. Trot! trot!! trot!!! on we marched. The music and singing was ended and the Swarajists were whispering—amongst themselves. I couldn't hear them but I concluded that they were thinking of dispersing. By this time we had reached Rang Mahal near Dibi Bazar. Here five or six members escorted me into a side lane. It was near sun set and the lane was very dark. We arrived at the door of a big house where one man left us and went in.

After a while we heard a voice calling from upstairs asking us to come in. At first I refused to go in, but a kick from the back set me right and I started going in. Hardly had I gone three paces when suddenly I was seized by the arms and legs and a huge sack was slipped over me and tied round me tightly. Thus bound and tightly secured I was unable even to move. Suddenly I was pushed and I fell down,—seriously hurting my nose (thinking I would powder it when I got home). Next four men carried me and took me into a very small room. This I judged from the fact that there was barely enough room for me to stand. They left me standing my head against one wall and my feet on the opposite wall. The door closed with a bang indicating that I was alone and free to think.

No, I was mistaken, I was not alone. Hardly had I composed myself, when I heard a pattering sound on the floor and walls around me and Oh! horror! Tiny little creatures were climbing on me. Was it, that my death, was to be

brought about by poisonous snakes or were they some other reptiles let loose to torture me. Just imagine Oh Lord, ! what troubles on me a boy of fifteen. What would my mother say if she saw me in this plight. Yes ! I had altogether forgotten my home. It was night and I was not home. What must be their plight ? They must be crying, thinking me to be lost, or dead. It was good my mother could not see me in this state. Think ! what it would be to any one of us, were we mysteriously acquainted with, every open danger, every risk of sickness, every secret peril through which our best beloved must pass. To see the rock treasuring to its fall, and they loitering beneath it, to see them drink water, and know it to be full of the foulest poison ; to see them embark upon a ship, and be aware that it was doomed to sink, but not be able to warn or to prevent them. Surely no mortal brain could endure such constant terrors, since hour by hour the arrows of death flit unseen and unheard past the breasts of each of us, till at length one finds its home there. Truly, the power that limited our perceptions did so in purest mercy ; for were it otherwise with us, our race would go mad and perish raving in its own terrors. H. H.

Up ! Up !! the creatures climbed, till I think I was fully laden with them. All of a sudden I felt a severe pain in my thigh, as though something had bitten me, but it had bitten something else too. The rope which coiled round me tightly, snapped, and I was free. Quickly I took off the sack and lighted a match to see my benefactors. Imagine my surprise, when I saw rats, perhaps hundreds of them,

on the floor, on the walls and everywhere in the room were rats. For a moment my eyes rested on them and then the thought of escape came to me. I tried the door, but was disappointed to find, it was firmly secured on the outside. The roof and floor promised nothing and the walls had no window. Well the only thing to be done was to wait. Next I tried shouting for help but without result.

Quite an hour passed and nothing happened. I began to feel sleepy. I dosed a little, when the door opened, and two men stood before me, with lamps in their hands.

Not a little were they surprised to see me sitting free. So great was their surprise, that they nearly fell backwards. They whispered to each other and one of them left us. The man standing in front of me was a Sikh of about thirty years of age. He was good-looking, yet had that sternness on his face, which is common to all Swarajists and from which one could expect the least mercy. He wore a piece of cloth round his waist to cover his nakedness. An iron bangle was on his right wrist. His complexion was dark, and his beard, mustache and hair all combined in one came to a terminus on his head. There he stood bare-footed, with the lamp light shining fully on his face. He looked at me steadily and without winking as though he was trying to search my very heart. To break the silence, which had commenced to weigh upon me, I ventured to ask a question. "Khalsaji (for by such title are all Sikhs addressed) may I know what you intend doing with me" ?

He continued gazing at me silently. Thinking that perhaps he did not understand English I asked the same question in Urdu, but with the same result.

After about ten minutes, the other man came in. He was a cleaned shaved Hindu with stern features. He was clad only in a dhoti and wore two golden rings in his ears. Being rather fat he walked slow, as though his own weight was too much for him to carry. A bodhi¹ stood erect on his shaved head. He advanced slowly towards me till he was only about a yard from me. Then with a sudden cat-like movement he pounced on me, and the Sikh followed. My mouth was opened and gagged with rags and a kerchief tied round to prevent the gag from coming out. Next my hands were tied round at the back with a silken rope, so tightly as to pain me severely and lastly a band was put over my eyes. Thus gagged and bound I was led out into the street, for I could feel the fresh air. From this street we plunged into a narrow side lane for our footsteps sounded hollow. Where were we going? Were they leading me to hang me in some desolate spot? Or was I going to be lathied further on? These and such other thoughts occurred to me. My throat was dry and my brain was reeling and my whole body was aching. I thought I was going to fall and I did fall. Being blindfolded I could not see and my foot slipped over a brick. They picked me up and in a way stood me on my legs. Then on we marched and marched, through lanes and

1. A small pigtail, on the head as a token of Hinduism.

endless lines. My captors avoided going on the roads. Just then a distant bell announced 11 o'clock; after about three-quarter of an hour's march from here I noticed that our footsteps did not sound hollow and that we were in the open, perhaps outside the city. A dim light filtered through my bandage, indicating that it was a moon-light night. Under us was no paved road, but grassy ground.

Thus in silence we marched on and in another fifteen minutes we had stopped. My captors stood silent as though waiting for someone. Suddenly a distant whistle, pierced the stillness of the night and was answered by another whistle at my side. My captor blew two notes and silence reigned once again. They sat down on the grass and made me sit as well. I obeyed.

Once again the silence was broken, but this time not by a whistle but by a distant gong announcing the midnight hour, and at the same time I could hear approaching footsteps.

Very shortly a band of men arrived and called out "Oh! Obedient Singh." "O! Tabaydar Ram." Both my captors responded to the call simultaneously. By this time the other party reached the spot where we were and after wishing my captors, sat down on the grass.

After being seated a grave and solemn voice spoke and commanded the removal of my bandages. This was done and I opened my eyes and saw a terrible sight. There sitting right in front of me were Swarajists. Yes! I counted fifteen

of them in number (excluding two of my previous captors) looking steadily at me. To the left and right, stretching away for miles was a jungle with a small path running along its boarder. Up above us the full moon shone and cast its cold light on the earth below. I ventured a glance to the back and Oh! horror it was a river. Ravi river for in the distance I could faintly discern the Railway bridge. "Oh merciless God! I cried aloud. Is it that after my earnest prayers, you allow me to be frownded and that by such infidels? Yes! to be drowned for which kind of death I have the greatest horror."

Then like ice on fire fell the cold voice of one of my judges "Child blame not God for it, for it is his vengeance which is being executed on you people."

"And who the devil are you to execute it?" I exclaimed, my spirits rising within me.

"Child storm not at us, for we are those unfortunates who have lost every thing in the world, even our country and now we have only one remaining thing and that is our life, which we are not in the least afraid to lose, for our country's sake. Leave alone one life, had we a thousand lives each we would not be afraid to lose them one by one, on the foreigners torture wheel, for our Motherland." This reply—brought me to a full stop and the conversation ceased for a while. Knowing that no mercy would be shown to me by such, I decided to know their motive and if possible to argue my case out and thus perhaps save my life.

So I commenced "But may I know who are you? and why assemble here at this time of the night?" to which they replied "Child why pretendst thou, not to know us? We are Swarajists and are assembled here to judge thee fairly by the law and pass the sentence, lest we be called murderers."

This reply thunderstruck me, for by it I came to know that they meant foul play. "Murderers," I said "you are worse then murderers who come twenty at a time to murder a child."

Nay! Nay!! Thou art mistaken was the reply "had we been murderers thou wouldst have ceased to exist long ago, but we desire to give you a fair trial by the law."

"What law" I asked.

"Indian Swarajists Law" he replied.

"Well" I cried "I am sure the Indian Swarajists Law does not tell you to go in twentys to murder children."

"Yes" said he "it does; even were thou my own child I would not have swerved from my duty but straight away passed the sentence. When my country is the cause, there is nothing I have which I cannot sacrifice for it. Country is that sacred cause for which one has to give up relations his power, and money. It is better to roll in the dust in a free country than be the king of a slave country."

"But" I asked "what is the fault of which I am accused? What have I done to your dearly beloved Country?"

"Yes" he replied "now thou art coming to the point. Well know in the first place that thou art accused of being an English man. Secondly if we let you live, then in ten years time, your breeds, one or ten in number will come in the way of Swaraj. Thus by ending you we end ten or perhaps twenty. Swaraj will then have so many difficulties less in its path."

I laughed aloud at this foolish talk and replied "Well repeating your own words you must also know in the first place, that I am not an Englishman, but a P——and even if I had been an Englishman, it was no fault of mine and you could not accuse me of it; Secondly had the British Government been so rascally mean as you, then perhaps it would have killed all your forefathers, so that today, you would not have existed and there would have been so many difficulties *less* in the Government's ways."

"We are pleased! We are pleased" they all cried and the solemn voiced man continued "that thou art a P——brother, for that reduces thine sentence provided we find thee of proper behaviour." Now let us know thy name and profession."

"I have no name and my profession is going to school." I said.

Whereupon he said "Stranger beware! We have thee entirely in our power. Give us thy name or we shall know it by force."

This inflamed me and I cried "Try force you brutes, and I will have you arrested."

He took no notice of this threat and called forth the executioner who rose from amongst them in the shape of a dirty nearly naked and silly looking man. I laughed to see the face of the executioner. This fellow could never torture me or know my name by force. He rushed towards me and when about to lay his hands on me, I slowly moved a pace backward, thus making him fall. When he fell I gave him a good kick on the nut with my ammunition boots. This stunned him, so executor No. 2 was called out. He was a stout man so I decided to give in and see what he did. He came and searched my pockets and abstracted one post card addressed to me. I stood silent and after a while the solemn voiced man spoke.

"Stranger we know thy name! it is Mr. P——which is an English name and thou hast lied before the Judges that you were a P——but extra punishment shall be inflicted for this."

Knowing no other punishment to be greater than death I boldly replied. "You infidels, I am not an Englishman but a P——, believe it or not."

"But how dost thou account for that name if thou art a P——" he asked.

"But I am a P——and P——'s do have such names."

"Alright" he interrupted "Taking for granted that thou

art a P——, let us know if thou dost favour Swaraj and its cause or not."

"This I can only reply you by asking you a question" I replied, "and that is do you want the truth or a falsehood to please you?"

"Nay Stranger," he said "again I say beware. Give us nothing but the truth, for it is not wise to lie before, Judges."

"Well then" I said "Here is the damned truth. I am strictly against your beastly¹ Swaraj, and even if you could put me to a thousand deaths, I would say the same. Is it not written in the holy books of each of you to love and respect the ruling King? Why then go against him and crave for home rule? In his reign we have no difficulties, and are free to do any thing. Why then creat all this unnecessary trouble, and shed blood of innocent people? It is a sin I tell you, both to go against the King and slay his innocent and faithful subjects. Think not that you will escape condign punishment, for yet there is a heaven above us. Not easily will India then free herself for God shall intervene and tax its people till these sins be wiped away with prayer, penitence and submission to the ruling King."

"It is enough" they cried "abuse not our Swaraj for thy end is near, therefore devote thy mind to God and say thy last prayer, while we sum up thy cāse and consult the verdict of the Jury."

1. Because of the inhuman treatment meted out to me.

After a few minutes he spoke again. "Stranger, by virtue of the powers invested in me, I command that the sentence of death be passed on thee, for being an *anti-Swarajist* and the extra punishment for cheating and deceiving the judges is that thy death shall be brought about by drowning, for which kind of death we have learnt, thou hast the greatest horror."

"We agree with thee O Judge " cried the other members."

"Then let justice have its course" he continued where-upon five or six of the members got up and rushed towards me.

At the sight of them terror seized me. They came towards me, mad, as goaded bulls. I ran away as fast as my legs could carry me, but in a few minutes it was all over, and they had caught me. I picked up a stray brick and pounded at the skull of one of them but soon it was snatched out of my hand and thrown away. They now led me back to the judge, where by his orders my hands were tied up.

"Oh God, what am I to do? I am about to be put to a terrible death." I cried. I shouted loudly for help but with no result. Oh Lord they were already leading me to the waters edge and I imagined it rose to meet me. Then splash! and down I went. Down! Down!! till I thought I would never rise again. At last my feet

touched the ground and I began to rise. I came to the surface and Oh Lord five or six of them were already in the water waiting for me to come up. They caught me by the neck and pressed me under the water and then darkness overtook me. I remember saying "You cowards" and screaming.

MOTHERLESS INDIA

BOOK II

MY DREAM

CHAPTER I

TERRIBLE NEWS.

WHY? What was this! I was not dead, but quite alive and wide awake. I had the remembrance of perhaps a horrible dream. It was now nearly midday for the sun was fairly high in the sky and birds twittered here and there. But where was I? I looked around and found that I was still on the river bank possibly in the same place where my would-be murderers had left me. But let me think. Was it only a horrible nightmare or did I really undergo those tortures. I could remember nothing. I got up and looked for footprints but there were none. Then I looked to my clothes, but they were dry and stainless. Then all this had been a dream indeed.

I looked around to see if anyone was near and to my joy saw a Hindu bathing in the river. I began walking towards him, but after a few paces checked myself. Should I again lead myself into a lion's mouth? "But nay"

I said to myself "I forget it was but a dream" and so I walked on.

"Nameste Babuji" I wished him; to which he replied "Nameste Maharaj."

He turned towards me and I saw his face and, Oh Lord! who do you think he was?

Well he was the same man who had been my judge last night. Yes! I recognised his voice too. What should I do? Should I run away? No! if my sufferings were a dream, it would look suspicious.

So I continued timidly yet with a bold face "I seem to be acquainted already with the Maharaj."

"No" he replied "Fair youth I do not remember to have seen you, yet I would like to know where we met."

Then I related to him the whole story on concluding which he laughed most heartily. "Child I must tell you that either you are mad or you have had a terrible dream. Know then from me, that India, knows no other Government but its own since the last five years. Yes! the British gave India its—Home Rule five years ago and you child know it not yet? It is therefore, I call you mad."

I gazed at him stupidly with an open mouth. Was I mad or was he mad?

"But" I continued "How on earth did this happen. I am sure it must have been no easy job to take India

After a few minutes he spoke again. "Stranger, by virtue of the powers invested in me, I command that the sentence of death be passed on thee, for being an *anti-Swarajist* and the extra punishment for cheating and deceiving the judges is that thy death shall be brought about by drowning, for which kind of death we have learnt, thou hast the greatest horror."

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I gazed at him stupidly with an open mouth. Was I mad or was he mad?

"But" I continued "How on earth did this happen. I am sure it must have been no easy job to take India

from the British without much fighting and sacrifice of thousands of your lives. Moreover India must have been blown to ruins before they left, so, I think you must not have got much of the booty.

"No" he replied "we arrived at terms and everything was settled amicably. Yes! They left peacefully, unharmed us, by us unharmed"

"So I thought" I cried "for it was next to impossible to obtain Swaraj by force."

"No" he admitted "not impossible, but a great sacrifice of lives and money would be required in that case."

"Or in other words" I said "you would have got India in ruins."

He replied nothing but commenced bathing while I stupidly gazed here and there thinking what to believe and what not to believe.

Presently he got out of the water and began dressing.

"Lalaji" I again began "What about the British citizens who were staying in various cities?"

"All gone! All gone!!" he said.

"Then" I said "what about my mother and brother, they must be surely here."

"Yes!" he replied "if they are Indians they must be here but if foreigners they must have left long ago. Let me know your nationality, for I guess by your dress you are not an Indian."

"I am a P——" I replied.

"Then" said he "your brother and mother must have left, which means child, that you are homeless and I shall be right glad to keep you with me."

Doubting all that he had said I first thought of satisfying myself. For it may be possible that this man pretending not to know me and after aluring me into the trap would make sure of my death a second time.

So I replied "It is very kind of you Lalaji, but first I would like to see for myself. You may anyhow give me your address so that I may come to you."

He handed me a visiting card with the following inscription on it:—

Mahashae Bhoot Nath

Sepoy Roll No. 203.

INDIAN REPUBLICAN ASSOCIATION,

NUR GALI, RANG MAHAL, LAHORE

I pocketed the card and after wishing him I left and—started walking towards my home. Soon I was on the Ravi Railway Bridge and was surprised to see how changed it was. In places where it was weak or broken great rafters of wood were put against it to act as supports. I wondered how this bridge would stand a flood, without being washed away. Soon a distant whistle, warned me of

an approaching train. I stood aside and waited its coming. Instead of seeing the engine, I saw that it was the guards van coming first. Then followed about thirty carriages and lastly came the engine. Did I say that the engine was last, if so excuse me, as I had only seen half the train in that case, for coupled behind the engine, were another thirty carriages. Never in my life had I seen a funnier train. The bridge vibrated violently under the weight of these sixty carriages and the engine. I wished that I was not standing on it.

I was still wondering, when I saw a still funnier sight.

About twenty yards ahead was a signal, a man climbed it, and pressed the arm down as a sign of "LINE CLEAR" to the train. After the train had passed he let go the arm of the signal and came down. I went up to him and asked him, first why the engine was attached in the middle of the train and secondly, why he did not control the signal from the cabin.

"Because" he said "it is more economical to my employers.

Strange sort of economy I thought to myself and commenced walking again towards the city. Presently I came to the Fort, and thence by Circular Road I reached my home.

What should I find there? Would I see my mother and brother.

I went in, and was shocked to see all empty. Yes! void of everything. Gone were the chairs and tables. Gone the almirahs. Gone the tapestries, and gone my relations. Yes! even my mother and brother. I stared and stared and then with a dejected heart walked back the way I came.

Still doubting, I thought of going to my school to see what was going on there. I reached it, but was stopped at the gate by a chaprasi, who told me that none were permitted in the factory.

"Factory" I echoed "what Factory? If I am not mistaken it is my school."

This is no School but a Khaddi Weaving Factory and ever *satan* cannot make me believe otherwise. Don't you know that there are no Schools now, all being closed by Indian Republication Association.

This reply wonderstruck me. Where-ever I went I found everything changed. Yes! quite changed, but yet the trees were the same, the sky was the same, the sun and moon the same. Nature endured, while mankind had only changed and perhaps would change how many hundred times.

No longer doubting the words of Mahashae Bhoot Nath I thought of going to him for a shelter. I had walked so much, and eaten nothing that day.

Thus at a quick pace I walked and reached Rang Mahal

and from thence by enquiring at several places I reached the Mahashae's house.

"Namestae! Namestae!!" he wished me smiling. "I am very pleased to see you back. Now son first come in and take food and rest. Not till then will I trouble you with my talk."

He led the way and I followed.

Presently we came upon a sort of a kitchen where a woman sat cooking. I was solemnly introduced as Mr. P—— to Mrs. Bhoot Nath.

After the introduction I undressed and put on a dhoti, which the Mahashae had given me. Next followed the washing ceremony and then the meal. I fell to it ravenously and soon finished what was in my plate. A fresh supply was made and it followed the previous one with equal quickness. After the meal, the Mahashae took me to an adjoining room where to my joy, I found a nice soft comfortable bedding. I lay down and it hardly took me three minutes before I was fast asleep.

When I awoke the full light was pouring into the chamber and by it, I saw Mrs. Bhoot Nath standing by my bed side. I sat up and asked her what time it was, to which she answered with a smile that it lacked four hours to midday. Next I enquired about the Mahashae.

1- A cloth tied round the waist and used as a lower dress in India.

"He has gone to the river to bathe as usual and will not be back till midday" she said.

I got out of my bed and after washing dressed.

Hardly had I finished when to my joy, the Mahashae came in.

"Hello Son you are up!" he said as he entered.

"Yes" I replied "I had just finished dressing when you came in."

"Now son, let us away for a good meal and then I shall talk to you" he said leading me.

After we had eaten he asked me whether I smoked.

"No never" I said "for we P——s never smoke, it being strictly prohibited in our religion."

"In that case I am sorry to have hurt your feelings."

"Never mind Mahashaeji don't be sorry, but now tell me what I should be doing. You know that I cannot sit idle and pass my time."

"Yes my child" he said "I was just thinking of that but first let me know how far you are educated?"

"Middle School."

"Well" he continued "I think it is sufficient but nevertheless let me test your abilities.

So saying he got up and took hold of a book from a shelf and spread it before me. I could not read for it was in vernacular, and I had only studied English. This fact I ex-

plained to him. He shook his head and replied "Well in that case your education is useless. The Laws of our Indian Republican Association condemn the English language and all State documents etc. are written in vernacular. This means that you are debarred from working in an office."

"Well Mahashaeji in that case, suggest another vocation for me." I said.

All of a sudden he jumped up and caught me by both the shoulders, his face radiating with glee.

"I have thought of suitable job for you," he burst out. "You shall join the Criminal Identification Department, or in other words you shall be a State Detective."

I was much pleased at the idea and asked him when he would get me the appointment.

"Directly, my son, directly—we start for the court and interview the Judge immediately. These appointments are in his hands."

So saying he put on his coat and turban and we started towards Delhi Gate.

CHAPTER II

I BECOME A STATE DETECTIVE.

THE New Kotwali¹ had been converted into a court, for the Indian Republican Association wished that a court should be near the City and not far from it. We reached this place and went right in till we came to the actual hearing room.

The hearing of case was about to commence and the Court room was full of people. My friend gave his name and address and was at once shown a seat where he sat down with me at his side. The room was ill-lighted but cool inspite of the April sun. It was void of furniture and every one sat on the ground except the Judge, who sat on an empty 'Johnie Walker' wooden packing case.

Every one had to take off his shoes outside, an example of which we had already followed.

The Judge was fat Mohammadan between the age of forty and fortyfive, he was clean shaved, except for a long beard which he had dyed red with henna leaves. On his head was a fools cap, (so I thought at first but later on I was informed that it was the cap of authority of the Indian Republican Association. It was an equivalent of the wig used in civilized courts). In his right hand he held a wand of cedar wood with a star at one end of it. He wore a spectacles, at the tip of his nose. As for his dress it was

1. City Police Station.

the usual Mohamadan dress, with the exception of a great sack cloth robe, put on the back and covering the shoulders to mark his authority. His left hand held a pen and frequently during the trial he waved this hand from left to right and from top to bottom. There he sat cross-legged on the box, gazing here and there.

Just behind him were hanging three brass gongs, the purpose of which as yet, I could not guess. A tall Sikh stood near these, waiting I suppose for an order from the Judge to strike them.

Lastly at the further end of the room stood three police men. They were dressed in ordinary clothes with the exception of a leather belt round their waist, which indicated their rank.

Just after a few minutes of our arrival, the Judge raised his wand, and the Sikh taking the sign, rang the three gongs. Now all present in the court, prostrated themselves and loudly prayed to God to make them do what was right and just.

They sat up and the prisoner was brought in.

He seemed to be of the bunnia or merchant class, was rather fat and on his face one could mark terror. He was tightly bound with ropes, his legs only being left free for him to walk.

When he was before the judge, his ropes were loosened. Now the Judge called up the accuser, Ilzam Rai, State

Detective. A man rose from the crowd and went up to the Judge and after saluting with his left hand stood there.

The Judge spoke. "The court requests the State Detective Ilzam Rai to give his statement regardig the prisoner Baygoona Ram."

The detective now spoke "Be it known that I, Ilzam Rai, was passing in Rang Mahal Bazar, when I heard the rumour that one Baygoona Ram had made a very good bargain that day, earning four hundred Swarajis¹ at once. Now gentlemen" he continued "according to the laws of our Indian Republican Association he ought to have given this money to the state, keeping only what was necessary for him. I went up to him and asked him, if he had made this bargain, when he denied it pretending to be ignorant of what I said. Now Sirs the whole bazar was witness to the transaction which he made. So seeing his dishonesty I arrested and produced him before thee, Oh judge. Now it is solely in the hands of the court to punish him or discharge him."

The Judge then asked the recorder if he had recorded the statement of Ilzam Rai, and upon receiving a reply in the affirmative he continued.

"And now the court demands fram Baygoona Ram, the accused, his statement."

The accused started when he heard his name called out and began to given his statement in low tones when the Judge shouted.

1. The current coin. Equal to eight annas.

"Loudly! I cannot hear you."

The accused then spoke more loudly, yet in a trembling voice.

"Sir it is all false. Ham Rai loves my daughter and wanted to marry her. I refused, and he concocted this false charge on me. I did not deny having earned four hundred Swarajis and was going to deposit the money in the State Treasury, the next day, but he arrested me before this."

The Judge now spoke.

"Accused it seems that your story is concocted, for how can a state official tell a falsehood. Therefore taking your statement as false, I proceed with the case. The Indian Republican Association means that all the subjects of the state should have equal shares of the state profits and you have gone against this, therefore in the capacity of a Judge I order your right hand to be cut off right here.

When he concluded a single stroke of the gong was heard, and a man with an axe on his shoulder came and stood before a block of wood lying there.

The policemen caught the accused, his hand was laid on the block, and with a single stroke of the axe was severed from its parent body. While this was being done every one stood up, as a mark of respect to justice. The accused

had fainted, and his body was given over to his relations who were present.

After the court room was cleared, the Judge turned to us and asked the Mahashae what he desired. The Mahashae replied something in a low voice which I could not hear. They conversed for about ten minutes. At the end of the talk the Judge spoke to me saying that I had been appointed as a State Detective (Conspiracy Department) on thirty Swarajis a month. (A swaraji is equal to eight annas but it was taken as a rupee) with free food and clothing. Regarding the work he told me that he would set me with another detective for one month's training. I thanked him and we left for our home.

As promised by the Judge, a detective (my trainer) called at 8 a.m. the next day and from that date I started my training. After the month had passed, I worked independently for five years. My chief duty was to detect conspiracies against the state. It would fill volumes to write all my adventures, but space compells me to pass over all these and only to note the most important ones.

During the five years I had many experiences and noted many things. The Indian Republican Association, had changed India altogether. Changed it to such an extent, as to weaken it. For instance they had no regular army. "For" said they "it is not necessary to maintain an army in the time of peace". All schools had been closed and education was at a dead stop. Only a certain

class and caste of people were allowed to learn reading and writing from their masters. All customs of the civilised countries had been reversed and adopted. Public telegraph, telephones and Radios were strictly prohibited and were only used for State purposes. All cinemas and theatres were also closed. Every man was allowed half a swaraji a day regardless of his earnings, which if exceeded this amount had to be deposited in the State Treasury. Breaking this rule meant the loss of a hand or foot. No one was allowed to dress according to his wish, but had to don the dress which the Indian Republican Association had fixed for his profession. No one had motor cars or other carriages and the horses were used for ploughing. All property belonged to the State and no one owned a house. The rent was fixed at one Swaraji per month per head and was duly collected by the State in the beginning of each month. The month consisted of sixtyone days and there were six months in the year, of course one month being of sixty days. The time was read in Urdu alphabetical characters. There was no press and news were spread by means of crying and beating drums. Trains were run only once in a day and everybody paid the same fare, there being no separate 1st and 2nd class compartments. All the tribes were sworn to the defence of the Republican Association and however much they might quarrel amongst themselves, if need rose, were outwardly ready to die to the last man for the Indian Republican Association. H. M King Amanullah of Kabul received yearly a subsidy o

360,000 Swarajis, from the Association in lieu of which he promised not to attack India. Russia, Tibet, China and Persia were paid similar subsidies on similar promises.

I wondered why with this same money the Association did not maintain an army at each of these frontiers, instead of bribing and begging their neighbours, not to attack them. Foreigners were not allowed to come in, and if any were found, they were beheaded. The State wages to its employees were the same i. e. half a Swaraji a day, the highest and lowest inclusive. Municipalities were dissolved and people had to manage their roads and sanitation as best as they could. Vegetables, flour and other articles had fixed prices and any one found selling any thing above or below this price was punished.

Well with this mad Government I passed five long years and in all detected nearly nine hundred conspiracy cases, including two very serious ones. In one of them nearly fifteen hundred men were involved who were found corresponding with Kabul to come and attack India. The other one involved only nine hundred persons, who were corresponding similarly with Russia. Out of all these persons arrested, only three were punished, and the others were let off. Imagine then the danger I was in all the time. These men hated me and sought to make an end of me at their earliest. It was not seldom that bombs were thrown at me, but always I escaped miraculously. Pistol and even rifle shots missed me, many times. Occasionally my food

was poisoned, but my cook died instead of me for I made him eat it first, partaking of it myself after an elap-e of at least four hours.

Naturally I was tired of this life, as any one else would be, with enemies swarming on all sides. I wondered what sort of people these Indians were, who were content with nothing. When the British ruled, they clamoured for Swaraj, and now that they had Swaraj, there was still the same discontentment among the people. Of this discontentment we shall learn the cause hereafter. Now returning to our story, when I saw that the Police and the Judges always let off the persons arrested, I gave up arresting, and worked with a broken heart, for how could I compete with the bribes, which the Judges took. Another year passed and then I decided to tender my resignation.

CHAPTER III

THE MURDER OF THE MAHATMA.

WITH this determination I approached the Judge and submitted the form. Without looking at it he thus addressed me.

“Welcome to you honoured man. The State fully appreciates your labour and will soon have the satisfaction of seeing you handsomely rewarded and promoted.”

This form of speech was contrary to the mood I was in, and therefore I cried out bluntly.

“And the State will also have the satisfaction of seeing me brutally murdered if it does not let me off.”

“How now young man” he said “when on the very verge of success you want to give up your position. Yes, youth means rashness. Let me advise you. Firstly you know of the brutal murder of the ‘MAHATMA,’ the Chief Judge and Governor of Bombay, and the scandal it has caused. Man I tell you, that if the murderer is not brought to bay, and punished, India will be ruined, for the feelings of the Hindus and Muslims are strained and on the point of a breakout. The Indian Republican Association has selected you. Yes! *you*, to take charge and dig out this case and bring the murderer to justice. Imagine then the honour and power you will have when you are successful.

“But” I cried “when did this brutal action take place I am till yet perfectly ignorant.”

“Did you not hear my drum beaters announce it yesterday. If not, I will tell you. He was murdered at four o'clock in the evening yesterday, by a Muslim fanatic, in Bombay. In India we have now two parties. One, the Muslim party, who desire themselves to be the rulers of the day, and the other Hindu party, who also likewise wish to establish themselves as the rulers of India. I know, it is terrible, but it cannot be helped. Moreover the Indian Republican Association will have to give this murder of the *Mahatma*, a purely *personal* appearance on the face of it and never allude to its *political* aspect, otherwise a rebellion may break out at any moment.”

“But Sir” I again said “Up to this date I have nearly arrested about three thousand persons and the State has only punished three. It therefore means that I have a good many enemies. Men, who owe me grudge. Men, who would at the first opportunity end me. Of what use, then this power and wealth, which one cannot live and enjoy? Better is the lonely cottage in a village than this wealth in a city and better is it to be a mere labourer in fields than to wield this power. Nay Sir Judge! I no longer work for the Indian Republican Association and even God will not move me from this resolution, for my cup is full even to the brim and a drop more will make it overflow, which will send my soul shivering to despair, madness, a certain doom and—”

“Look now how foolishly you talk” he interrupted. “Man I tell you, you are ignorant! Yes ignorant of the

policies of this Government! ' It is for the benefit and welfare of the people that the State only imprisons a few persons. Look you now, if all these persons were imprisoned as you say, then who would feed them. Surely not the State, for State money is public money and it cannot be spent on such idlers, who if free, earn their own. Moreover look at the terrible amount of expenditure which is saved, by keeping no Jails and its employees etc. Also, you have enemies in Lahore only and not all over the world. You are transferred to Bombay where for the future you are to work. One thing more I may add, that you must promise solemnly not to tell any one of your departure from Lahore or of your arrival in Bombay. Of course the Criminal Identification Department will be informed by us and from there you may draw your pay etc. The police will help you in every way and you are to start your work at once."

The idea of being transferred, got me right in the hip, and I gave the required promise on my word of honour. The Judge then invited me to dinner that night.

I reached his house just at eight and after the dinner I was given two seven chambered revolvers as a present from the Punjab Government. Accompanied by the Judge, a powerful Dodge car brought me to the station, within two minutes. A special Government car was attached to the train for me and after seeing to my luggage etc. I came

out, and walked with Judge on platform, to while away the time.

"Isn't India in a worse condition than when the British ruled," I presently asked the Judge.

"Yes," he said, "it cannot be helped, young man, curse this party feeling. I tell you that had India been a one religioned country and free, it would have been the best, biggest, and strongest country in the world. But God's hand is long and who knows it may become so, that is when, slowly inch by inch we drive out the Mohammadans. These brutes are always a hinderance in our path. They have been so, they are so, and they shall ever remain so. Remember when once India was striving for Swaraj and nearly obtained it, how these brutes intervened and killed the Swami thus converting a political movement into communal movement. Also you remember the Lahore and Multan riot cases, and the Mopla rebellion in—."

Suddenly I jumped aside as some body struck me on the shoulder. I turned at once, to face my assailant and imagine my surprise when I saw standing in front of me, my patron Mahashae Bhoot Nath.

"Ah" said he "although you had forgotten to bid me farewell, see I have not forgotten to do so." Then perceiving the Judge he wished him. The Judge thus addressed the Mahashae. "We the authorities of the State are much indebted to you Mahashae Bhoot Nath, for bringing into

the service of the State, a worthy and noble man as Mr. P——, who within the short period of five years has worked wonders and promises to be the best man in his work. Therefore the State will remember your kindness and will reward you handsomely when the proper time comes."

Mr. Bhoot Nath was very pleased at this address and in the turn thanked the Judge for the special favour he had shown to me. Just then the train whistled, I jumped in my car and the train started. I sat waving my handkerchief to the Mahashae and the Judge. They grew smaller and smaller as my train advanced, and finally vanished out of sight.

CHAPTER IV.

C. I. D. AFTER C. I. D.

IT is now the third day in Bombay and I am walking hithe and thither without any aim. In this new city I feel lonesome. I have no friends and no place which I may call my home.

Yes! Gone was the Punjab and gone my home. The mighty Indian Ocean takes the place of the beloved River Ravi. Instead of petty pleasure boats, mighty steamers fill their place. My mother tongue Punjabi is replaced by Gujrati of which fortunately I know sufficient. Strange faces pass me, and strange to me are their dressess. I have taken an abode at a hotel in Parel, where, I take my meals twice a day. In my spare time I walked about the streets, trying to pick up information from every place I sit in, from every person I talk to, and from every object I see.

Thus within the next three days I was only able to form a very rough idea of the Mahatma's death. The sum of the information was as follows:—

The Mahatma, the Chief Judge and Governor of Bombay Presidency lived in Parel with some friends, (for family he had none). Ten days before his murder he received a threatening letter from an unknown party, saying that if he continued to persecute the Mohammadans and favour the Hindus, then he may think himself dead within ten days.

Nine days passed and nothing happened, but on the tenth, something did happen and it was that the Mahatma had shut himself up in a room, the door of which was strictly guarded. The guards swore that no one had passed them, yet when the door was opened, the Mahatma was found lying dead with a wound over his heart.

It was the first baffling mystery which I had come across. In Bombay the belief was that it was the work of magic, but I had my own opinion.

The house of the Mahatma was open to the public and every one could go and see it.

I determined to visit the place and see if I could find any clue. I reached it and was at once shown in. I now stood in a room about ten by fifteen feet, and hardly twenty feet high. It was void of furniture except a bloodstained carpet which was lying on the floor. All present, kissed this carpet and offered prayers, but I stood in meditation. The room had only one door which if guarded would prevent entrance to the room totally. Then like lightning a thought flashed to me. What about the roof? Had it an opening or not? I looked up and yes! Surely there was a large sky light.

So it follows that since the roof was not guarded the murderer entered the room and killed the Mahatma. I looked about the room to see a way if I could get on to the roof from inside, but found none. Now, as I was looking about

I saw two suspicious-looking Parsees, looking at me and whispering. Thinking that they were discussing something about my appearance, I took no notice of them at that time, but an after occurrence made me remember them more than ever.

CHAPTER V

MY ARREST.

I stood there for a few moments in deep thought and then started a thorough search of the room, to see if I could find a clue. I looked all over but found nothing till I came to the blood stained carpet. I lifted it up and looked underneath. I sifted the sand with my hands and while doing this I found a small object in my hands. I lifted it up to the light and imagine my surprise when I found it was a gold ring with something inscribed on it.

I quietly slipped it into my vest pocket and continued my search. My next find was something which made my heart throb. It was the Mahatma's takli or hand spinning device. It was nearly full of thread and a flake of unspun cotton was still dangling at its other end. The thread was blood-stained and two finger impressions were distinct. I pocketed this also, first taking care to wrap it in my handkerchief. The last thing I found was a whiff of hair, also clotted with blood. I took this and prepared to go, and just as I turned round I saw a shadow, rapidly withdrawing. I paid no heed to this and walked out of the room.

The time was now about 5 p. m., and after having my meals I reached home. I switched on the electric light and took out my plunder. Now I thought of finding out the identity of the murderer, from the clues in my possession.

First it was the ring. Well it was a lady's ring as far

far as I could judge. With my magnifying lens I looked at the inscription. It was the *crescent and the star*, revealing that the wearer was a *Mokammadan*. I gazed at in silence only to discover that in the crescent were three letters, so small that I could not read them even through the lens. To read them I wanted a microscope, and I had none. Well I thought of my friend Dr. Z. Ahmad.

I put off my light, locked the room in feverish haste, and rushed to the Doctor's shop. He was just locking his doors, when I gripped him by the arm. He wheeled round, only to find himself face to face with me.

"Well P——" he started, but I cut him short.

"Mr. Z. Ahmad" I said "I desire to use your microscope for a few moments and I hope you won't mind."

I placed the ring, crescent up, under the powerful set of lenses and looked through the eye-piece to see what the five hundred times magnification revealed. The small letters were now quite clear. They were M. R. D. and between each letter were figures, which first I mistook for full stops. After great efforts I found them to be 786. Not satisfied with these observations, I asked the Doctor if he could loan me his microscope for a day or two. He agreed remarking that the instrument was for seeing germs and I was looking at a big thing like a ring, as though I could not see it with the naked eye. I thanked him and turned to go, when again I had a suspicion that somebody hastily withdrew from the window, in front of me. I came

out, microscope in hand. and looked round, but no one was there. After wishing the doctor a good night I walked homewards.

On the way I thought over the whole affair. Of one thing I was sure that the wearer of the ring was a Mohammadan. There were two facts to confirm this. One the crescent and the star and the other the figures 786. These figures are a reepresentation of the "Kalma" or the holy prayer of the Mohamadans, and wherever space compels 786 is used instead. Just as I reached this conclusion, I found myself at the door.

Once more I sat at the table with the microscope in front of me and the ring. I racked my brains to find out something more from the ring. I turned it round and round and looked at each indent, each mark, each scratch through the microscope. Having discovered nothing further I took up the next item namely the takli of the Mahatma. From what I could guess the takli had a long story to tell, and my surmise proved true, as will be seen from what is detailed hereafter.

First of all, it must be understood that the takli is a device for spinning cotton by hand. It is generally a stout piece of wire, having a conical weight attached at one end, the other end being hooked. While spinning the takli is held weight downwards and a piece of twisted thread is tied to the upper end of the wire, and coiled round it. The other end of this thread is placed in some unspun cotton

and a new thread drawn with the head till it is two to three feet in length. Then the takli is given a violent twist and allowed to hang. While revolving rapidly, it twists the thread and makes it strong. The spun thread is coiled round the wire, and the operation repeated. The hook in the top end of the wire, prevents the thread from uncoiling while the takli is spinning. After a considerable amount of thread is spun, a cone of thread is formed on the wire.

Now returning to the story, I found, as aforestated, two blood-stained finger impressions on the cone of thread. I looked at them through the microscope. No lines were visible in the impressions. What I saw were simply two blots of blood one larger than the other. The larger one a thumb mark and the smaller——? Well it was certainly *not* the pointer impression. I looked again and again and then a thought flashed to my mind. The man who had handled this takli had no *forefinger*. Yes! I could now plainly see that the pointer was *missing*. The second impression was of the middle finger and was followed by two faint marks for the last two fingers. Certainly without the microscope I would not have found out this.

I jumped up in joy and clapped my hands in glee. What a clue! What a glorious clue!! Now I could find out the murderer, simply by finding out the man, who had a forefinger missing and he who had Mr. R. D. as his initials and—and was a Mohammadan; but—but I was forgetting myself. What about the whiff of hair I had found. Could

it be that the murderer was a woman. No! certainly No! For how could a woman have so much courage and yet why not? These and other thoughts puzzled me a lot.

Feeling tired and sleepy I consulted the watch. Good God! The time was 3 a. m. I carefully hid the Takli, the ring, and the hair in secret niche in the wall, and locked it up. Now the next thing to do was to put off the light and go to bed. I was about to switch off when I discovered that in my haste I had forgotten to undress. Oh! Why was I so forgetful? I started undressing when Rap-Tap-Tap. Surely somebody was tapping at the door. Thinking it was my imagination I began again when it was repeated loudly. This time there could be no mistaking. Somebody *was* at my door. I went to the door, and peeped through a crack to see who the late visitor was, but due to the darkness outside, I could not succeed.

I was just thinking whether I should open the door, without ascertaining the identity of the caller, when the knock was very loudly repeated and a voice called out the single word "OPEN." The tone was an authoritative one, and the voice was not known to me, atleast I did not remember having heard it before,

"Who's that" I shouted.

Ofcourse I didn't open the door fearing lest there may be robbers, who wanted me to open the door, or—or—a horrible idea struck me. Supposing it was the murderer o the Mahatma who, having come to know that I was trying

to detect the case, had come to make an end of me. No—, I will not take any chances by opening the door I thought.

"Who's that" again I asked, when the outside one replied.

"Open in the name of the law."

"What law" I asked.

"Indian Swarajist Law. Sections 153, 374, 459, 860, 359" was the reply.

Oh Lord! what was this I heard? Section 153—Murder, Section 374—warrant of arrest, Section 459—Power to shoot or kill to affect arrest. Section 860—Search of premises occupied by a criminal and lastly Section 359—Theft. I was thunder struck. I an official of the Indian Republican Association charged with murder—theft and what not. Surely they had come to the wrong door. It could not be me, they wanted.

So I boldly asked. "Have you a warrant of arrest and if so what is the name of the person you want to arrest?"

"Yes" came the reply "P—the name."

There was nothing more to doubt and knowing that if I did not open the door they had powers by virtue of section 459 to break open the door and even to shoot me dead to effect my arrest, I gave in and opened the door.

Ten—Fifteen or more persons rushed in. *Did I say—*

persons? If so excuse me. They were policemen, or properly speaking, members of the C. I. D. in uniform.

The leader or incharge of the gang approached me and caught my wrist saying "Under Sections 374, 459 etc., of Indian Republican Association law, I am empowered to apprehend the person of Mr. P——, caste P——, and resident of Lahore. Therefore having satisfied myself that you are the same person, I arrest you, and here is your warrant arrest, if you care to go through it."

Dumb founded, at this address I gazed at the paper held out, for me to read. It ran as follows:—

*In the Criminal Court of Bhai Labboo Ram,
Judge and Acting Governor of Bombay.
Parel Dated the 7th day of the 2nd New
Moon of winter*

Whereas the members of my Criminal Identification Department have proved to my satisfaction that you P——have murdered the Mahatma, Late Governor of Bombay on the eighteenth day of 1st new moon of winter and that you carried out the crime in some mysterious way, which at first defied detection. Lu' Justice always has its own course and Providence made Mr. Dinshaw and Mr. Sapurji, two of my best C.I.D. men to follow you on suspicion. Their noble efforts were rewarded, when they found out from certain actions of yours, that you were the wanted culprit, who murdered the Mahatma. But you were not satisfied, with murder only, so you again visited the room of the late Mahatma, under the pretext of pilgrimago. You tried to destroy the clues which would lead to your apprehension and at the same time you

removed certain valuables of the late Mahatma, which it seems he was in the habit of keeping under his carpet. Therefore I charge you with murder and theft under sections 135 and 359 of the Indian Republican Association Law. Accordingly I empower Messers. Dinshaw and Sapurji under sections 374 and 459 of the above said law, to arrest you under any circumstances, and to search your house under section 860 of the same above mentioned law. After your arrest they are directed to produce you in person before me in my court at Parel if the time is convenient, otherwise to put you in the city lock-up, till such time as you are produced before me. These, my orders, are final.

Given this day the seventh day of the second new moon of winter in the 6th year of our reign, under my seal and signature.

*Seal of the
Court.*

*(Sd.) BHAI LABHOO RAM,
Chief Judge and Acting
Governor of Bombay.*

Amazed and horrified I looked at the crowd. Oh God! what a foolish and wretched Government this was, who could not distinguish between its own men and the public.

Now! I could value the British Government. Atleast the State affairs were well managed and a man could hope for full justice. But with this mad Government No justice—No regularity in state affairs—No peace and above all it did not know its own members. Oh! it made my blood boil to think of it. How I wished and inwardly prayed to God

only to send the British back once, again to take matters into their own hands and rid me of a mad--unjust and foolish Government like this. Really the worth of a thing is known only when it is gone. So with the British Government.

Why could God, not kill me? Yes! give me instantaneous death, to free me from such mad fellows.

I swore to myself inwardly that if I was fortunate enough to escape from these fools this time (unless I was hanged) I would not serve this State any more, or if they refused to free me, I would hang myself and make an end. I was still thinking--rather dreaming--when the constable incharge spoke.

"Hey boys! decorate this honourable gentlemen's wrists legs and neck with those pretty looking manacles you've got there with you."

I looked up to his face. There was something very familiar to me, in it. It seemed as though I had seen it somewhere. I shifted my eyes, to the next face peering over his shoulder. What was wrong with me? I seemed to know it as well. I looked to the others--no, I did not remember to have seen any of them before. Thank God. I looked again at the two familiar faces and I remembered. *They were the faces of the two Parsees, who had looked at me in the Mahatma's chamber.* Yes! I had forgotten. Did not the warrant of my arrest say "I empower Messrs. Sapurji and Dinshaw--two of my best C. I. D. men."

So, these were the two bright gems. No doubt they were the best men in their art, who could not distinguish between the innocent and the guilty, and who pinned the crimes committed by others, on to the head of the innocent, and above all, who could not recognize their own kind. Intelligent! Undoubtedly intelligent!! were the C.I.D. members of the Indian Republican Association.

Well at the command of their leader, the gang hastened to handcuff and collar me. I knew that resistance was useless, so I quietly submitted, and within two minutes was nicely secured.

"Now boys!" shouted the leader "while we lead this honourable gentlemen to his palace yonder, you seal up this room, and one of you remain here on guard."

He walked two paces dragging me after him then turned round and again shouted.

"Hey boys! I have changed my mind. Don't seal up the room, but set up a trap and be careful if anything is removed. Upon your own head be it. Farewell."

Saying this he walked out of the room, taking me with him. I wondered what he meant by the words "set up a trap."

It was just dawn when we reached the City Goal. At the gates, a sleepy sentinel asked us our business, but at a word from Mr. Sapurji he let us pass. till

we came to the cells. One of them was opened, and, I was roughly pushed in, the other end of the chain being locked to the door. A guard was placed outside, and the rest of the gang retired.

Now I was alone to think. Should I reveal my identity or should I keep quiet and see the turn of affairs. But again if I kept quiet, these mad fellows surely hang me as the murderer of the Mahatma. They knew no justice, it mattered little to them, whether the real murderer was hanged or an innocent man. Nay I would take no chances, as it is always dangerous to play with fools. Even now I had my doubts. It was quite possible, that these fellows would take me one fine morning, for a joy ride, and before I knew where I was, I would find three feet of clear space under my feet. No trial—nothing.

Such and other thoughts troubled me, but I came to one conclusion, and that was that I would reveal my identity at the earliest possible opportunity. The time was now about nine o'clock, and I knew that somebody would now be coming to take me, as at ten o'clock the courts opened. Nor was I mistaken, for shortly afterwards I heard the tramp; tramp; of sentinels approaching my cell. I made ready to go and stood up. I waited about half a minute when a shower of abuses greeted my ears. The voice was familiar to me.

"Let me go you owls. I say upon my honour that I know nothing about the affair," said the voice.

Then I heard some oaths and a dragging sound. Yes! they were dragging the man towards my cell.

Next a constable approached my cell, opened the door and a man was roughly pushed in. He fell to the floor and the door was locked. I helped the man to his feet, and Oh Lord! who do you think he was?

"Dr. Z. Ahmad" I cried, "what fate is this? What brings you here?"

He was not less surprised to find me in the goal than I was. In ordinary circumstances, as it was, Dr. Z. Ahmad was slow in his speech, and now in this terrible state he lost the power of speech altogether. After a while he composed himself and managed to speak.

"At about seven o'clock this morning, I had a call from a patient having cancer. I took some pus from it on glass slides, and asked the patient to call after an hour, when I would give him medicine, after examining the slides under the microscope, to find out the nature of the germs. But he insisted on waiting and said that he would pay me fifty Swarajis extra if I examined the pus immediately. Fifty Swarajis you know are not little, so I set about it at once. I went to see the microscope. It was not there and I remembered. Accordingly I—I went to get it from the store. Finding the door shut, I knocked and someone said "Come in" from inside. I pushed open the door and walked in. Three blokes then pounced on me and brought me here."

them why they had arrested me, but they were as dumb as the Sphinx. Now perhaps you can enlighten me on this point."

I listened in silence and he continued "Just imagine the loss of reputation. What will the patient think. He will wait, wait, and wait, and then the fine news will reach him. What news? Well that his good doctor has been arrested, and is in the city goal and then the whole street will know of it. Thus Dr. Z. Ahamad's name will be trumpeted by a thousand throats. Oh my God! what a misfortune. I am ruined. I am undone. I am——."

"Now compose yourself Dr. Z. Ahmad. It is useless to cry over spilt milk." I cut in.

"But Mr. P——" he began again, when the door of our cell was opened and another man was sent reeling in.

Oh Heavens! what was this? This man was the hotel-keeper from where I took my meals. Had these cursed C. I. D. men determined to imprison all my friends. I went up to the hotel-keeper Mr. Lobi and asked him what brought him to the goal when he burst out.

"Aray! what Seth. I went with your tea as usual to your house and knocked. I was told to come in, and then, before I knew what had happened, I was gripped by the neck and brought here. Aray Saith! for God's sake I am a poor man. Don't forget to pay me when you come out or if you have no hopes, then tell me where you keep your

money. I swear by God I will only remove what is actually due to me—Aray sahib don't forget I am a poo——”

“Now look here Mr. Lobi” I interrupted. “Don't you perceive that we are in odd circumstances and yet you greedy man, can talk of nothing else but money.”

“Aray Saith” he started again “you see I have been put in odd circumstances, only on account of you. A trap was set at your house and——”

“A trap” I cried anxiously. “What——what is a trap?”

“Well” he continued “when criminal is arrested, the state naturally desires to find out his associates. So they set up a trap. They keep the arrest of the criminal a secret, and then some of the constables sit it his house. When any body knocks they say ‘come in.’ Once the victim is in, they nab him. A trap may continue for months or even years, and the trial of the criminal is kept pending till such time, as sufficient information about him and the crime, is obtained. But Aray Saith what about my money, I am a very poor man——” and he began the same old yarn again, when I checked him.

“For God's sake now—stop.” I said a bit harshly, when the man burst out in tears “Oh my God—what misfortunes. I am ruined I am lost.....I am undone I am——” and he sobbed and howled for an hour at least and then was quiet.

I thought over the whole affair. If the trap continued

for months, then it was obvious that I would be detained in the goal pending my trial, for months. I only wished them to conduct my trial as early as possible, so that I may have an opportunity to reveal my identity. But I was forgetting myself. What about the search of my house. Surely they would find my papers showing who I was, and then I would be set free. But again as the trap was in progress they would possibly defer it. In that case there were no hopes for me.

I was feeling sleepy, as I had no sleep the whole of the last night. I leaned against the wall and went off into a good sleep. It was hardly an hour or so when I woke up to find a constable standing in the room.

"Do you want me to get your meals?" he asked.

"Yes-- certainly. I am feeling very hungry," I replied.

"Then out with th coin" he demanded.

"What coin" I asked. "Does the state not supply the food" --- moreover I ---I ---have hardly any money on me--- if-- if--you are talking of a bribe."

"What do you mean by a bribe? Man! come to your senses. The state supplies no food to criminals. You have to buy your own. Do you think that the state is going to supply free food to such idlers as you? Never! Therefore, hurry up, and give me the coin. One good Swaraji for one good meal."

“ Oh ! merciful Lord ! where art thou ? Deliver me from these satans ” I exclaimed. “ Oh Jesus Christ ! Lord of the British and all other Christains. Deliver me from these Hyneas, as thou didst deliver the Isrealites from the clutches of the Pharaoh of Egypt. I do solemnly swear, that if thou dos't deliver me, I shall accept thy faith and religion. Grant this, my short prayer, Oh Lord Amen ! ”

This short prayer relieved me very much and after that I determind not to think over any thing because everything was possible and at the same time impossible in this beastly land. So I left myself entirely to the mercy of the Lord. But the Lord heard my prayers and like lightning came his reply. Behold ! A constable stood at the door and called me to follow him. My collar ring was removed and once more I was a free man. Not quite free, for another constable tied my hands with some cord, one end of which he tied round his waist. The first constable next said.

“ Away with these to Jadooghar ” pointing at the doctor and the hotel keeper.

My heart stopped beating and my breath froze, when I heard these words. The Jadooghar ? That place of horror, where tortures of a million kinds, had made the walls of the room red with blood, as though they had been painted with vermillion. Must I allow my friends to be sent there, while I escape without snffering ? *Never.*

Then if I wanted to save them what must I do ? My

conscience at once gave a clear reply in one word. "Admit!" Oh horror! Admit the crime! How could I? I was innocent. It would be equal to hanging myself. No! I will not admit. The shadow of the gallows was already before my eyes. There I was standing with a noose round my throat. The executioner was ready to draw the chord. The Judge dropped his kerchief, a sign for the executioner. He pulled the chord I—I could hardly breathe and then came darkness. Horrible, horrible was the very thought of it. No I would be dumb as a mummy. To speak would be death, but—but to keep quiet was still more horrible. If speech meant death then silence meant torture——horrible still more horrible. Death is a dark gate which is difficult to pass, but once passed, there is perpetual light beyond, but torture is a living death.

Oh! Lord of all worlds enlighten me. Give me power to discriminate between the right and the wrong, or give me instantaneous death to free me from these mental agonies. Then again a clear voice rang in my ears.

"Yes that is right P——! Keep quiet, that is the best thing to do. Ruin those two innocent men. Deliver them to the executioner. Those two innocent persons whose whole misfortune perhaps, is that they associated with you. Therefore keep quiet, be an honest man yourself and let others suffer what they will,"

At first this sound was faint, but gradually it became

so loud, that it rang, echoed and re-echoed in my ears till I imagined that the whole building was vibrant with it.

"Up to now P——" roared the voice in continuation "you were a good man and many people blessed you for your kind acts, but if quivering flesh, and broken bones have a voice, all these blessings will fall back and this curse alone will ascend, to heaven."

The sound ceased and a great calmness overtook me. Was this my conscience which was speaking, or was it the voice of God which spoke within me? All my fears had disappeared. I had now determined to speak. Whether it was the voice of God or my own conscience that spoke, but the stamps of truth and justice was on the words. Hours seemed to have passed by, but it was hardly a minute since I had heard the constable speaking.

Suddenly a loud howl brought me to my senses. What was this? Oh I had forgotton, it must be Mr. Lobi who had discovered that he was being taken to the Jadooghar. Yes! I was right. Already they were dragging him. He was struggling violently. His face was ashen white with fear. Now was the time, for me to save them. Yes! now was the time for me to pass my own death sentence. Now or never. I must hurry before it is too late, already they were ten yards from me. The Doctor was calmly following the constable, while Mr. Lobi was howling, cursing, and struggling violently.

"Oh! Mr. constable" I shouted. "Please in the name of justice and the law hear me."

The constable turned and came back dragging his prisoner after him.

"Now" he shouted "Why did you call me back in the name of the law."

"Because," I replied, "you are about to do injustice, that is, you are about to deliver two innocent persons to the executioner, while the guilty one escapes without punishment."

"Explain yourself" he retorted.

"Well" I continued in a solemn voice, "the fact is that I murdered the Mahatma, then why should these two innocent people suffer on this account, when I admit the crime."

"So you admit the crime," he said "tis well and good, because you have thus saved us a world of troubles."

"Then brother what should we do next." he said addressing the other constable.

"Take what he has said in writing and get his foot too impressions and signature." replied the other.

"You have heard" said the first man addressing me.

"Therefore jot down what you said in black and white. Here is the roll and ink."

So saying he threw down a roll of paper and a reed pen with some coloured pigment. Now came the hitch and doubt. I did not know their language, much less to write it. So I expressed my inability to the constables and told them I could write only English and to write in English would be of no value as they could not read, moreover it was not the legal language of the country.

At first they argued with one another, for about half an hour, and then came to the conclusion, that one of them should write it out in their vernacular and I should affix my foot toe impression to it. So one of them wrote out a yard of the roll which was next read and translated to me. It ran thus:—

Written this day the 8th day of the second new moon of winter in the 6th year of our reign. Whereby I declare to all Gods of India, that I was an enemy of the Mahatma. One day, I decided to kill the Mahatma. Consequently I went to the room of the Mahatma, and there killed him dead. Therefore I am willing to suffer the sentence of death, which the Gods, the Judges and the people of India pass on me. To this paper I have affixed my right and left foot toe impressions and my fore-fingers impression of the right hand and my forehead impression, as an acknowledgment of what is written above.

When I heard this I felt inclined to laugh, but knowing the consequence of such a foolish act I kept quiet. Next came the impression fixing ceremony, and

when it was ended, the Doctor and Mr. Lobi were released. At this moment I felt a great inward joy, that at least I was successful in saving two innocent people from torture and perhaps death. The moment Mr. Lobi was released he ran away like a mad man but the Doctor came to me and accosted me as follows:—

“Mr. P——you think I don't know, but I know or can atleast see through everything. Honest man! to save us, you have sacrificed yourself and admitted the crime, but you are more innocent than, even us. May God be always with you.”

“Don't fear” said one of the constables “he will soon be with God and will always remain with him. So God will not have the trouble of being with him.”

Whereupon the Doctor left me and I stood in silence wondering what the next part of the drama would be.

The constable, then again tied up my hands which had been released to take impressions of my fingers. Now that the excitement was passed, my hunger returned with double strength. I, therefore, took out a Swaraji and gave it to the constable asking him to buy me food. He put it in his pocket and lead me to the shop which was inside the goal itself.

condemned man, and then he was to be hung up by this nail till he was dead. What foolish people? The nail was four inches long and one inch in diameter at its thickest end. The other end was tapered to a point. The moment such a nail was hammered into the head of the victim, instantaneous death would be the result. Then, where was the use of hanging him by the nail? Foolish thoughts, foolish ideas, and above all foolish people. The nail was placed on my head and the hammer was ready.

The judge stood before me and solemnly asked, "What is your wish in this world, for soon you will be gathered to Rama. Speak therefore and let me know, if you want some eatable, some person to see, or some secret to reveal before death. I will wait for your reply till yonder constable finishes counting up to three hundred. If within this period, you do not speak, I will conclude that you desire nothing in this world, and are fully prepared for making your journey to the next world.

"Begin"! said he addressing the constable, who at once began, one two, three, four etc. counting very rapidly.

Now was my time to reveal myself. Now or never! I would be hung up like a log with a nail in me if I did not speak. So I addressed the Judge.

"Sir Judge" I began "the only thing I desire in this world is to tell you, that I am a C.I.D. member of the State, and was sent by the Lahore authorities, on special

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commission, to investigate the case of the Mahatma. I had just begun my work when your men arrested me, thinking that I was the murderer. I did not reveal my identity till this time thinking that when my house was searched, my letters would reveal who I was. But in this matter, I was disappointed, as my house was not searched, though it was your Honour's express command, to do so. Now I pray to your honour, to order an immediate search of my house, to find out the truth of my words. If I have told a falsehood to your Honour, I may be hanged without mercy."

When I had finished speaking, I looked up at the face of the Judge. It had a funny expression. It seemed he was bewildered, and did not know what to do, but the general appearance showed joy. There he stood mute before me. I did not break the silence but waited to hear what he said. After a long while he spoke at last.

"Stop" said he to the constable who had reached counting up to two hundred and ninety five" and you remove the nail from his head" he continued addressing the other. His orders were immediately obeyed. Next he addressed me.

"Prisoner! If I believe your words, then I can safely say that a great injustice had been done to you, and if you prove what you say, the state will compensate you for all these troubles."

that you have heard my prayer, but apart from that, I would point out to Your Honour that I require to prove nothing. Simply search my room and the truth of my words will come to light."

"So be it" he said and continued, addressing the constables "You owls! You idiots! You will one day get yourself hanged and you will drag me to a similar fate, by such negligent work. I have a great mind to punish you for this. Go now, search this man's room, and bring all state documents, papers, rolls etc, that you find there. If you don't find any papers, etc, then bring any thing which you find to indentify this gentleman. Have you heard? Then go! and return within minimum time."

CHAPTER VI

MY RELEASE.

DURING the interval of about half an hour, the Judge was lost in deep thought. From the expression of his face I could read, *what was passing in his mind.* First there was anxiety, mingled with hope, then came a blush and a shadow of fear, as though he was sorry for what he had done and lastly a stamp of boldness, showing determination. He was passing this last phase when the constable returned. Not a word had passed the lips of the Judge up to this time. Now he spoke, thank God, for, the silence was beginning to weigh on my senses.

"Well! what news do you bring!" he cried addressing the constable. "Come man! Speak quick! I cannot bear the anxiety any more."

The constable spoke and may God bless him for his words for they infused new life in me.

"Your Honour" he replied. "This man is innocent and his words are true. He is a state employe and here are the documents and rolls."

The Judge took these with a trembling hand and glanced through them carefully.

"Here Mr. P—————" continued he "are your papers. Take them and be happy. I now pronounce you, a *free* man to the Gods, the Peoples, and the Judges of India. I will see, a way for the state to compensate you, for the troubles, anxieties and the inconvenience to which you have been put. Therefore go thanking the Gods for their mercy and continue your work."

"Sir Judge" I replied "I know not how to thank you for your kindness but as regards the *Gods* a new light has come to me. There is only *one* true God, and no other will I worship except him. I have sworn it."

"Ah that's fine joke!" he replied "you ofcourse mean the God of the cursed Forangees (christians) who, through the mercy of our Gods, fled."

"But—I am not jok—I began, when he cut in sharply "It is getting late, and I must be getting along soon, otherwise there is some one to judge me at home, who often accuses me of flirting. Farewell" So saying he left me and the constables followed.

Thinking it useless to stay there any longer. I also started walking homowards wondering, how easy it was to entangle oneself and how easy to free oneself from such affairs, in this horrid land. In other countries the trial would last some days, months, or years, before one was condemned, and again it would take still longer time to get oneself honourably acquitted, specially in such state crimes.

At last I reached home. The door was wide open. I entered to see who was inside, but imagine my surprise when I found no one.

Next I looked at my things to see if anything was missing. No! Thank God nothing was missing. I badly needed rest, as I had no sleep the whole of last night, and I needed food as well! Should I go to Mr. Lobi's hotel? No! he would shout and howl on seeing me free and people would know, what was not good for them to know, for yet I had a plan. My belly said food first, and plans afterwards. So I slipped into a small coffee hotel after having washed myself at home. After finishing my meal, I repaired home and began setting up my things, which had been displaced by the constables. This work being finished, I once more sat at my table, thinking what my next step should be. But before I could, form any definite, idea, drowsiness overpowered me and I thought of going to sleep. I undressed and lay down. I soon fell asleep and was wandering in dream land, all the troubles, all the sorrows and all the horrors of this horrid land, forgotten.

Oh! Now I was treading a golden land. Green trees stood everywhere. How cooling and pleasant was it to sit under them and watch the streams and brooklets roll by. The birds were merrily singing overhead and the cows peacefully grazing on the rich pastures. The corn was ripe and I could see golden field, after field, ready for harvest. The trees were over laden with ripe fruits and the flowers

poured out the best of their scents to the air, while busy butterflies sucked out the choicest of their life juice. The sky was as clear as a crystal and the sun shed its rays of life on the world below. The inhabitants of this land, wore blazing garments of selected colours, and had shining faces. It pained my eyes to look at them. Real peace reigned here.

Someone passed by me and I asked "where am I?"

"You are in the land of the Master, (whom you called in that prison cell), where peace reigns, where there is no deaths, and where all sorrows of the world fade away. Enjoy! therefore while you may, for the master is due to come". Replied a rich melodious voice.

Then I stood up and said "Oh! Let me see the Master. I will fall at his holy feet and kiss them. I will worship him, for have I not sworn it, that hereafter I will entrust myself solely to his care,"

Suddenly music burst out upon the silence, and how sweet and melodious was the tune. It was altogether unearthly and celestial.

The one talking to me cried out "Behold the master! He comes to those who think of him and to those that are in trouble".

I looked but saw no one except——another one,——one whom I had seen somewhere O! Now I remembered,——it was in the Schoolroom——a picture in which I had seen——it

was the Saviour—the Lord——himself. I ran up and fell at his feet and kissed them whereon a voice said

“Rise. Thy prayers have been heard.”

I got up and opened my eyes and lo! I was on my own bed in my room. Was it a dream? A vision which had been sent to me by God. Oh! what a luck? What a glorious vision it was! I would give half my remaining years, to see it once again.

It was just dawn, I got up, washed my face and dressed up. After having my tea, I thought of going over to the Judge to disclose my plan to him and take his help if possible in capturing the real murderer. Accordingly I reached his court at about 10 O'clock. He was about to begin a case when his eyes fell on me.

“Halo Mr. P.——” said he “suppose you have come to me for that compensation money but——”

“Your Honour” I put in “I have not come for that, but I have come to discuss important State affairs with you.”

“Important State affairs?” he echoed.

“Yes Your Honour” I continued. “Your Honour is aware of the fact that the real murderer of the Mahatma is still at large, and I have to bring him to bay, somehow or the other, but this cannot be done without your help.”

“Yes! Yes! Any way in which I can help you” said he,

“Then your Honour I desire that my release be kept

a secret and on the contrary, my execution be broad-casted. The real murderer, when he hears this, will be over-joyed and may perhaps become careless and give out his identity. I have clues with me, with which I am sure of capturing him sooner or later. Therefore I humbly pray to your Honour to help me anyhow. Of course I quite understand Your Honour's position and appreciate that how difficult it is for your Honour to broad cast false news, but in the interest of the state this is not altogether impossible."

"All right Mr. P——" he said "it will be done as you say. Now I have a case to attend therefore farewell."

I triumphantly marched out of the court and came back to my house to go over the clues once more, to form a definite opinion, as the experiences of the past day, had upset my mind altogether. I opened the secret niche and took out the ring and takli, which I had found in the Mahatma's room. Next I thought of re-examining the ring under the microscope. I accordingly went to the table with ring in hand but the microscope was not there. *It was missing.* I was dumfounded. It was the Doctor's property, and I had lost it. What would he say? Who could have stolen it? Was it that the constables took it away? My first impulse was to report the matter to the authorities, but I refrained, because I knew that the matter would become public, so I thought of another stratagem. I decided to go to Chore Bazar—that famous and ill-reputed bazar of Bombay, where all property stolen from the city, finds its way for sale.

Within a few minutes I was there, enquiring from shop to shop, as an intending purchaser of a microscope. At last my labours were rewarded, when a shop keeper offered me one for sale. I scrutinised it carefully and discovered that it was the same one, which I had borrowed from the Doctor. I asked the price, and the shop keeper demanded thirty Swarajis, whereupon I offered him sixty, on condition, that he would disclose to me the identity of the person who sold it to him.

At first he hesitated and said that it was against his principle to disclose anything, but when I increased my offer to a hundred Swarajis, he was like 'wax in the moulders hands', to me.

"Yesterday" he began "it was about four o'clock in the evening when a man came with this for sale, and I-I-offered him half a Swaraji. But he declined the offer, and I increased to one Swaraji, and he agreed. To me this instrument was nothing but brass and glass and I wanted to dispose of it atonce. I went to an optician and he told me that it was useless to him, but that the thing was valuable, a new one costing about six hundred Swarajis. I brought it back and determined not to sell it under twenty Swarajis. But you Sir, offered me sixty straight away—and I think I am lucky. But—excuse me, Sir, for the bluntness. I desire payment before I proceed further, to disclose the identity of the person, who sold me this.

Accordingly I paid him one hundred Swarajis, and he began again.

"Now Sir, I will tell you all I know about the man. Well to begin with, the man who sold me this, was about twenty years of age and wore a Turkish cap. He was clean shaved and rather fair looking but this man, Sir, can be found out very easily. I mean that he had a *fore-finger missing*".

"What?" I jumped up in surprise and asked. "You mean to say that he had no fore-finger."

"Yes Sir" was the reply. "I emphatically confirm, that the man who sold me this microscope, had no fore-finger on one of his hands."

"Which hand" I enquired.

"Well Sir" he said "the place which you now occupy, was the same where he stood and I sat where I am, and I am sure it was this hand which had a missing fore-finger" so saying he caught hold of my right hand.

"So" I said "you mean that it was the right hand which had no fore-finger."

"Yes Sir" he replied.

"Then" I continued "could you tell me anything more about this man, any other scar, or sign by which he may be found, I mean anything else besides his missing fore-finger"?

"Yes Sir" he replied "though it is very faint yet it can be easily seen, a scar across his forehead."

"Alright" I replied "thanks for this information, but please keep a look out for this man. If you see him anywhere or he comes to you, detain him in talk, and send a man to me immediately, and for this I will pay you six hundred Swarajis."

"What?" was the surprised question. "You will pay me six hundred Swarajis for this."

"Yes" I replied "and even more, if you serve me well. But remember that nothing of what has passed between us, should go to other's ears."

"Then Sir" he asked "If I am not inquisitive, I should like to know who you are and what is your connection with this man."

Now I became cunning, and I thought, that it was best if this man did not know the real affair. Just as he was selling one's secret to me, it was possible he might sell mine to some undesirable. Keeping this in mind I replied.

"I am a simple citizen like you and this man and myself have been great friends in the past. Having heard he is in Bombay, I tried my level best to find him, but failed and now by a mere stroke of luck, Providence has shown me where to look for him. I wish to take him by surprise therefore see that you don't mention a word about me, to

him. Now here are two hundred Swarajis as an advance for your work. If you fail to bring about this meeting, I shall expect you to refund me this amount in full."

So saying I handed him a bag of money, containing the two hundred Swarajis. With eager hands, he took the bag, thanking me over and over again.

I left the place and came back to my lodgings. Once more I sat at the table. Fate was but playing with me and I was a mere puppet in it's hand. Of one thing I had become certain and that was that, the murderer of the Mahatma and the man who stole my microscope were indetical. I wondered what was his motive in stealing the microscope. Was it that he had discovered, that this instrument had revealed his identity or his initials to me? or was he a thief by profession. Such and other thoughts troubled me, and to rid myself of them, I thought of doing something. Should I begin resetting my things—no—I thought of something better. I would go and return the Doctor's microscope. I went to the shop, but the Doctor was not there, so I left it with a note, telling him of my release and the theft.

I returned home and nothing fresh happened that day, but on the following morning, I saw a man walking up and down in front of my house. His movements seemed suspicious to me, as all the while he was walking, his eyes were fixed on my door. Therefore I went to enquire

what he wanted and imagine my surprise when I came face to face with the Chor Bazar shop-keeper.

"O Sir" he burst out "you had forgotten to give me your address and it was by mere chance, I have found you out. I was passing and saw you within, but I was not certain that it were you, hence I did not call before making myself sure. However I have brought good news for you. Your man is now in my hand."

"What do you mean"? I asked. Whereupon he told me that the man with the missing fore-finger had come to his shop last evening after I had left, asking for the microscope. Yes! he wanted it back and was ready to pay a hundred Swarajis for it, and I told him, Sir, he continued "that I had sold it, he increased his offer to two hundred, on condition that I would get it back from the man to whom I had sold it. I told him to come tomorrow that is today, and I would get it for him. Immediately after his departure I went out in search of you. I wandered in Girgaum, Bori Bunder, Fort, Gwalior Tank Road, Byculla, Colaba, and Grant Road, thinking I may meet you on the road but was disappointed. I renewed my efforts this morning in Parel and after walking so much, I have at last found you. The man may be waiting at my shop therefore hurry up and come along."

I hastily locked the door and followed him. What a chance, what luck?

In a few moments I would be speaking face to face with the murderer of the Mahatma but supposing he knew me, what then? well in that case I would arrest him at once—but again suppose he was innocent and moreover I had no charge against him to effect his arrest. Apart from that even if I arrested him on suspicion and was unable to prove his guilt, then I would become liable for damages. In all cases it would be best for me to make friends with him and naturally he would try his tricks on me. Then I could easily nab him as I would have a substantial charge against him. After that everything would be easy as the Jadooghar would make him speak, what he wouldn't like to tell under ordinary circumstances.

CHAPTER VII.

I MET THE MURDERER OF THE MAHATAMA.

ACCORDINGLY when we reached the shop, I welcomed this man with great warmth as though he was a great friend of mine. While shaking hands with him I noticed that his fore-finger was missing.

"Very pleased to see you Mr.——".

"People call me Mani Ram, Mr.——".

"My name is Mr. P.——" I replied. "Now Mr. Mani Ram," I continued, "this gentleman tells me that you want to buy a microscope and I have one so what price do you offer?"

While saying this I looked up to his face. The shop-keeper was right. I noticed a distinct scar running across his forehead and though it was very faint yet it was visible.

"Yes Mr. P.——" said he "I do want to buy your microscope. I am willing to offer you as high as two hundred Swarajis."

"But Mr. Mani Ram" I asked "may I know why you want to purchase this particular microscope, seeing that you can buy others as good, much cheaper than this."

"Ah Sir" he replied "here you are mistaken. I tried my level best to find one in the whole of Bombay, but was bitterly disappointed. Wherever I went people offered me new

ones for sale and you must know Mr. P.—that I am a man of limited means and cannot afford to buy a new one.”

“Alright Mr. Mami Ram” I replied “the bargain is made, the instrument is yours and it shall be given over to you tomorrow, but bye the bye would you like to have a cup of coffee with me at yonder hotel?”

“Certainly Yes” he cried, “but I think you will not mind me inviting you to my home, to have it there.”

“Agreed” I replied and began walking but not before slipping a bag of four hundred Swarajis into the shop-keeper’s hands. Mami Ram led and I followed.

“So you live very close” I asked him simply to break the silence.

“Yes” he replied “only a minute’s walk from here.”

He led me down a narrow lane and after passing six or seven houses, he turned into a still narrow lane or gully. In the middle of this gully he stopped at the foot of a staircase and with many bows beckoned me to mount up to his humble lodging. I knew that if I refused to go first it would only rouse his suspicion so I began mounting.

Hardly had I gone up ten stairs, when with great deafness two hands encircled my throat and were pressing—pressing and pressing. I tried to scream but of no avail.—Oh I was choking—nearly dying. I closed my eyes and then came darkness.

Once more I opened my eyes, I was living—but where was I? Then came the recollection. I tried to move, only to find that I was tightly bound. I looked around, only to discover that I was lying in a low roofed room void of all furniture. There was one door and it was closed. I waited till something fresh would turn up. Shortly after, the door opened and behold a man stood by me—the same Mr. Mani Ram. He laughed when he saw me awake.

“So Mr. P.—you were going to catch me, eh? but see fate has played you false. You are now solely in my power and within a few hours, will be a mangled mass of flesh and bones. Oh! then I will be free, with no one in the world knowing my secret. It was very clever for you to discover that the murderer of the Mahatma had a missing fore-finger, from those two clues you got, namely the takli and that ring, which you found in that old brute’s room. Well, you fool—you think that you have caught me, but know that it was I who wanted to catch you, and that is why I stole the microscope. I bribed the shopkeeper and paid one thousand Swarajis for catching you, that is, to bring you face to face with me. Of course, you will ask me how I discovered, that you had found me out, but I am not inclined to tell you and if you by some means escape to live, you may come to know; for the present, I take leave and will return within a couple of hours, after making the necessary arrangements for your safe departure to the next world. Farewell.”

After he had gone out I groaned heavily. "Oh Lord", I prayed. "O Saviour! Have you nothing but sorrows and troubles in stock for me? Merciful Lord, forgive me if I have committed sins or have done an unjust act, for have I not suffered much already in the past?"

I felt a drowsiness creeping over me, I think due to the tight binding of the ropes preventing blood circulation. I closed my eyes and swooned, and was unconscious for at least two hours, if my judgment has any value.

By instinct, I felt as though I was not alone. I awoke. I was feeling uncomfortably hot. I tried to turn round, but the bonds prevented me doing this. After a few moments, I heard footsteps approaching my bed, and next Mani Ram was by my side.

"Well, my fallen monarch" he asked "how do you do? I suppose you are quite prepared to travel against the earth's gravity. But you must not be discourteous enough to go away without giving back my things—that is, the ring and the takli. These two clues must be destroyed, otherwise I would not be quite free. Had you been hanged as the murderer of the Mahatma, how peaceful would I be by now. But as God will have it, this second way is equally good. So hurry up and tell me where these two things are hidden. They are not in your room, as I searched it thoroughly. I give you two minutes by yonder clock."

I determined not to tell him of the secret niche in the wall where I had hidden the ring and the takli. If he succeeded in destroying these two clues, then verily he would be a free man. After two minutes he returned.

"Look here, Mani Ram", I replied, "even if I die, I shall not tell you where those two things are hidden. So you may do your worst."

"Don't speak foolishly" he retorted "the best for you to do is tell me as otherwise I have means to make you speak. Now see, I will return you round so that you may see."

So saying he caught my feet and turned me round. Now I understood why I was feeling hot, for there, not three yards away from me, blazed a fire and in the fire were four or five iron pokers.

"See, man and tremble" he cried. "when these pokers will couch your body, the tongue will be loosened. Therefore choose to tell me straight away or to tell me under torture of burning hot irons."

I was dumb founded. I knew he would kill me, whether I told him or not, so the best was not to tell him. Hence I kept quiet. He advanced towards the fire and taking a poker by the hand drew it out of the fire. In a moment he was by my side, brandishing the red hot iron.

"Now you Owl! Speak before it is too late" he shrieked in a shrill voice, "this poker is going to find its home in your left eye. Speak! Speak Quick."

The iron poker was near my face and I could feel its fierce heat. It singed my hair, my throat became dry and my tongue was parched. The poker was coming closer. From a tiny speck the red point enlarged and became bigger, and bigger, till I imagined that the whole room was a red hot furnace. Like a living thing it advanced to meet me and oh! the heat was unbearable. My left eye was now nearly touching it. I closed the eye and—and waited for poker to touch. If I could help it I would myself have thrust it into my own eye, but I was helpless. Suspense is terrible and I could not wait.

Think what it would be to be suspended by a silken thread in the crater of a volcano, not knowing when the thread would snap. The bravest man in the world would be chilled to the heart. The only thing he should do is to break the thread and fall rather than bear the torture.

I waited—a second seemed to be a year when CRACK! What was this sound? The poker was withdrawn rapidly and another CRACK!! followed. It seemed as though somebody was breaking the door with a hatchet.

I opened my eyes and saw Mani Ram standing as pale as death. He saw me and rushed at me with the poker.

"I will end you with a single blow first," he shouted, but before he reached me, the door gave way and Lo ! Mr. Sapurji and Mr. Dinshaw stood before me with revolvers.

"Hands, up Mani Ram" cried Mr. Dinshaw "your time is up. It seems we reached just in time to prevent you carrying out your fiendish plan. Mr. Sapurji, you collar him while I keep him covered."

In a moment he was securely bound and then I was freed. After all I thought that the C. I. D. was not so hopeless as I thought.

"I thank you very much, gentlemen" I cried addressing the two worthies.

"Oh Mr. P—" was the reply "you need not thank us, for we have done our duty. This man is well known to us as the most dangerous crook of the town and accidentally seeing you in his company, we were naturally inquisitive to know what he proposed doing. We followed you and saw you coming up. We waited for about three hours, but you did not turn up. So we felt uneasy and one of us came up and saw you tied down and this rouse threatening you. We quickly fetched hatchets and rescued you."

"Well done, Mr. Sapurji !" I could not help saying.

"Now" returned Mr. Sapurji "Let us away from here and you, Mr. Dinshaw, take our worthy friend Mr. Mohd.

Razak Dutt to the "TALKIES" that is the Jadooghar and see what you can get out of him."

"What? Mohd. Razak Dutt?" I burst out. "I thought his name was Mani Ram."

"Yes!" replied Mr. Sapurji "He has a score of names besides these two."

Thus I left the place and reached home wondering what the next act would be.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LOVES OF LEELA.

EARLY next morning while it was yet dark I received an express message, from the Judge Bhai Labhoo Ram, commanding my immediate attendance at his house. I hastily dressed and within half an hour was talking with the judge.

"So pleased to meet you agin Mr. P.—" he cried on seeing me. "I hope you will not mind me troubling you but important state affairs pressed me."

"Doesn't matter, Sir Judge" I replied "you may command and I am ready."

"Then" he continued "you must know that Mohd. Razak is hanged and is by now reaching hell, and though his hanging is of little importance, yet the secrets which he disclosed are very startling, and if you care to know them you may go through this roll, which I have written in English specially for you."

So saying he handed me a roll which ran as follows:—

DETAILS OF THE FACTS DISCLOSED

by

MOHD. RAZAK DUTT, CRIMINAL

at the Jadooghar.

Her two eyes shone like two flaming orbs. Perfume was her in breath. In whispers came her sighs of love. I stole one more glance at her, and finis — I was no longer master of myself. Her very face was bewitching and Oh ! even the full moon would feel shy at seeing her.

"Leela, Leela" I cried, "Do you really love me ?— speak.— confess. Do you really mean what you say. If so I am your slave. and —."

At these words she screamed, one simple scream of joy of a maiden yielding to her lover.

"Yes, beloved" came the soft reply. "I mean what I say. Rather be a beggar and remain at your side than to be the wife of a chief judge and governor, that cursed fool who is a second born brother to me. Yes ! Mr. P. — he is my real younger brother and according to the law of this country, married me but oh ! I swear upon God — upon my eyes — upon you my beloved that I — I — have remained pure upto now. Never did I allow that fool to come near me and never did I consider myself his wife. He made many attempts to win me, but my heart is a fort of stone which cannot be conquered by anyone— much less—by my own blood brother. But you have won me, and I am your slave. Don't throw me away as light nor think me a wanton."

"Without sleepless nights and hours of waiting, if you have won me, take me to your heart and press me to your

side—let me lie in your arms with my head on your bosom, like a baby who finds comfort on its mother's breast,"

I—I—pressed her to my heart — and — and kissed her — yes I kissed Leela who was another man's wife. May God forgive me for the sin — but why a sin? She was not another's wife—she could not be the wife of her own brother.

"Dear Leela", I asked, "how can I ever hope to marry you—you belong to another?"

"No, I do not belong to any one but you, my dear," was the prompt reply. "To marry me is simple—the law affords it and the court awards it. According to the Swarajist law a woman or girl whether married or single, can stay at will with any one whom she chooses and the husband, father or any other relation has no right whatsoever to stop her, under any circumstances".

"Dear Leela", I cried "then let us hence to my house, See the sun is now far above the horizon".

"So be it" she answered, "your will is my will" and we started from thence.

When we reached the main building Leela stopped in thought.

"What ails you dear", I asked. "Nothing oh nothing" she replied— "but I was thinking—why? according to the

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When we reached the main building Leela stopped in thought.

"What ails you dear", I asked. "Nothing oh nothing" she replied— "but I was thinking—why? according to the

law, this house is mine, hence why should we not enjoy our honeymoon here—wait. —I will tell that fool to vacate” and she started towards the house.

In about ten minutes she returned with a smiling face.

“In an hour’s time he shall be away; meanwhile P. —: (for now I shall so call you hereafter) let us sit beneath yonder grove of trees and talk—yes talk of love, and the other things besides. See I will unveil myself from the folds of this sari. It is too heavy for this frail form of mine. You shall see my form and call me beautiful. Did you ever see such arms, rounded and shaped to make any one jealous? Again my neck, how graceful it is. The swan would even feel envious of it, but the best of all things is here” and saying so, she let loose her hair and pointed to it. “See” she continued, “they reach right to my feet and defy the raven’s wing in colour. Did you ever see finer locks, on a woman’s head? Now look at me—I am free from these feminine wrappings—see my form and admire—Yes; confess that I am beautiful?”

There she stood in front of me looking royal with her erect form. I felt inclined to fall at her feet and worship her—yes I did it—the shame of it. In a twinkling of the eye I was at her feet and kissing them.

“Leela”, I groaned, “I am dazed—nay blindfolded to see thy nude royal form. Now and for ever I worship thee. Without thee for one minute I shall not live. Your very

sight burns my eyes—nay my whole body—I fain would fall on you and cling to you," and I clung to her legs. I had lost all control of myself and I was so mad at that time, that I am sure if she had commanded me to fall into a well I would have done it.

At once—all of a sudden she covered herself. "Now enough of this wanton play" she said. "Now let us sit and talk."

I was a puppet in her hands and hence I quietly obeyed. We seated ourselves on the grass beneath the cool shade of the trees.

"Now dear," she began, "tell me of your future plans. What you intend doing? and where you intend going?" I tried to reply but could not. I composed myself. My whole frame was shivering like an aspen leaf in the wind. At last by a super-human and strenuous effort I managed to talk with her.

"Leela dear", I cried, "up to this day I had plans and thoughts of my own and knew what to do and where to go, but now, I know nothing, I know not even myself. You have changed every thing. You are the star, the moon, the sun, the earth, the sky and the world for me. I go whenever you go, even if you lead me to destruction. Your plans are now my plans and your being is my being. Guide me, therefore, and I follow."

"Bravo", she replied. "Brave words, my Lion. I shall not betray the trust which you have placed in me. I shall soon crown you king of India if you but follow my plans. Now up with us. The time is ripe and that fool my brother must have left by now. Come let us go in and have a slight repast."

I followed as in a dream. I was amazed and bewildered. Did she mean what she said? Would she make me the king of India and even if she meant it, how would she bring it about—she was simply a woman. But yes, what thing is there in this world which a woman cannot do. Was not the world, all for woman? For whom did the man work? For whom were the battles fought and won? For whom were murders and other crimes committed?

There is only one answer to all these questions and that is WOMAN.

Presently we came to the room,—my lady's room I mean. It was richly furnished. Silken curtains hung on the doors and richest carpets of Persia spread on the floor. We seated ourselves on a sofa lined with the finest of Agrá's silken loom. A meal was brought in by a servant—a female servant—and we ate—and laughed—and talked. Leela took nothing but milk and fruits—and I took the cooked dishes. After it was all over, Leela spoke.

"Now dear," she said, "But a while ago, we were talking of our future plans. I have thought over the whole and

briefly laid down, they are follows:—Both of us must go to Lahore—to meet the Sher-e-Punjab.”

I jumped up in horror—

“Why, it is better to walk into a lion’s den” I cried.

“Nay, Dear”, she replied, “calm yourself. Hear all I have to say and then give your opinion”.

“Proceed” I said, and she went on.

“Yes, both of us must go to the Sher-e-Punjab—not to tally forces with him—but to assist him in his endeavours. Let him carry out his plans. Let him bring India under his control and let him be crowned King of India——then when all is ready with one stroke of the sword I will crown you king of India—he can be murdered.”

I was horror stricken, my conscience would never allow such a hideous crime and yet, if I refused I would gain the displeasure of Leela. It was agreed and the next day we started for Lahore.

CHAPTER IX.

WE MEET THE SHER-E-PUNJAB.

—X—

AFTER a tiresome journey of some days we at last landed safely at the station and not at all grieved was I to be in my native place once more. The journey did not end here, for we had a few miles more to go to the village of the Sher-e-Punjab. Accordingly we left the train and journeyed beyond, in a bullock cart. After hours of bumping, thumping and jostling, we at last arrived at our destination.

The village was situated on a sort of a mount and had about twenty or thirty houses in all. We ascended the mount and came to the gate of the village, where we were challenged by a sleepy sentinel. We expressed our wish to see the Sher-e-Punjab and seeing a lovely lady at my side we were quietly admitted.

We marched and were led to a somewhat high, but mean looking building. This was the abode of the Sher-e-Punjab. The door was open and we stepped in.

The room, we now stood in, was meanly furnished, and save a leopard skin spread on the floor, and a half broken cot, was void of furniture. We sat down to rest ourselves

after our tiresome climb up the mount. So weary were we that we did not even talk one to another door. I marked that the room had another door on the opposite side to the one, from where we entered. This door I guessed led to another room beyond and not far was I from the truth, as will be seen hereafter. We sat quietly waiting for something to happen.

Five—ten—fifteen minutes—an hour passed, but nothing turned up. I began to dose, and would have fallen asleep had not a cracking of the door disturbed me. I looked towards it. It was the one through which we had entered. It was moving—little by little it closed.

At first it did not strike me, that the door was being closed by some mechanism, but in a flash—I realised it and was up, but it was too late. By the time I reached it, the door was tightly closed. I came back and sat down wondering whether the door was purposely locked to trap us. I woke Leela who had gone off to sleep and acquainted her of this fact, but alas! what could this poor creature do.

Suddenly a terrible voice boomed out "What wants Mr. P.—the State detective. Does he think of trapping the LION in his own den, if such his intention, then perhaps, he has realised by now, that he is not better than a prisoner."

The voice ceased and a terrible fear overtook me.

Now Leela spoke. "Far be such thoughts from us. It is not Mr. P.— who comes to the Sher-e-Punjab, but I Leela Wati, late wife of the Chief Judge and Governor of Bombay. Yes, I came to the Sher to render every assistance and help to him, and with me I bring the light of my eyes. my lover Mr. P.—."

She stopped and the voice again began. "How is the Sher to be convinced of your intentions?—and even if so, the Sher desires no help from women. Depart therefore as early as you can. Food, water and conveyance will be provided."

"Nay" replied Leela "we have come to stay, unto death. Let the Sher hold us prisoners and starve us—his friends—under his own roof, till he is convinced of our fidelity "

The voice again spoke. 'Are you willing to take the dread oath upon Rama, Ravana and Krishna to convince the Sher.'

"Yes" cried Leela "We hereby solemnly swear in the name of Ram, Krishna, and Ravana, that we are true friends of the Sher and will remain faithful and loyal to him till we die."

"Enough—enough" cut in the voice "you are now free and I am just coming down to you."

The door which had closed, opened automotically. A man stood in the door-way and we beckoned him to enter

whereupon he came quite close to us and bent the knee. We also bowed and he sat down besides us.

"I am a humble servant of the Sher", he said, "and I come to you by the orders of my master."

"You are welcome O———but what may we call you?" I asked.

"Call me Ass—simply Ass," he replied. "All good men in this place are named after animals—as the master is the Sher—the king of all beasts and animals."

"Welcome to you O Ass" I replied, and he bent low in acknowledgment.

The Ass was about thirty years of age and clean shaven. He had a fair complexion and a face which seemed somewhat familiar to me. But it was not his face that had a sinister look—rather it was in the eyes that one would find open evil written. The stare was murderous, and one could find nothing but blood in them. Surely the owner of this pair of eyes was a criminal—nay a murderer. I kept calm and did not let my face betray the opinion which I had formed. While I was studying the face, the Ass was staring at me as though reading my face. I put on a modest face, and allowed him to have a full view of my face. After a while he shifted his gaze to Leela.

Next he spoke "I am satisfied, O stranger. Your intentions are good. Now have food and then I shall talk again."

He clapped his hands and Lol two servants appeared bringing two trays of food, which were set down before us. We ate and washed our hands. After the meal was over the Ass again spoke.

"Now strangers! tell me what you intend doing and what are your plans?"

I kept quiet, but Leela spoke. "O! Ass" she said "Our plans are quite simple. Let Mr. P——go and preach to the people the tyranny of the present Government. He being a Government servant people will listen to his words more than to any other's. He shall tell them how honestly and faithfully he worked for six long years and got nothing but troubles and oppressions from the Government. Therefore he left service and was now a fugitive under the protection of the benevolent Sher-e-Punjab. The present system of Government not being good, let India have its own King and who was more worthy than the Sher. Thus Mr. P——shall sow the seed of affection for the Sher, in the very hearts of the people. Meanwhile I shall travel to Kabul—to King Amanullah as an ambassador of the Sher and tell him of the weakness of the present Government, and how the Sher was ready to help him with men and food if he only marched down the Khyber to attack India. Not only this—but the Sher would reward him with the whole of N. W. F. Provinces".

The Ass was stupified—at such an ingenious scheme, and showed his appreciation by a nod of his head. "So" he said "your schemes are indeed very good and bold. Indeed if you succeed the Sher would reward you handsomely. Undoubtedly he would make you his Prime Ministers. Rest yourself now and be prepared to depart at dawn. I can assure you that the Sher will give his consent to such pious actions. Early in the morning you will have an audience of the Sher. Farewell till then."

He got up and walked out of the room. It was now near darkness so without a word more we went to bed. That night was the happiest night for me, for I slept in the arms of Leela. Later we began talking. Not of the world — its cares, hates, pains and sorrows — but of love and nothing else. How I loved and how vowed — that nothing but she would be dear to me and how she blushed and sighed and half conversing half dreaming. But all that has a beginning has an end and so the night ended. The next crew. The door opened and the Ass stood before us — a torch in hand.

The hall was not very big, but it could accommodate about two hundred people. The walls were decorated with old swords, banners and other implements of war. At one end, a sort of throne was placed and a body of men stood on either side. The beating of a drum was now audible — and a voice proclaimed the coming of the Sher.

All present prostrated themselves, and we two alone were left standing. Next a clean shaven man came in. He walked straight to the throne and mounted it. He turned his face to us and — — and I gripped Leela's hand. It was the Ass.

He laughed. "Be not surprised my guests," he said "Excuse me if I have deceived you. Behold me! I am your friend the Sher-e-Punjab, ready to help you in any way." We bowed as a mark of respect.

"Now" continued the Sher "Here are letters of credence and enough gold to reach Kabul. A body of fifty selected men waits outside, therefore depart, Madame—and I wish you all luck, in your enterprize. I will await your safe return with anxious eyes. Any other service?"

He took Leela's hand and going down on one knee — he kissed it. He led the way and in a few moments we were out in the open air. A retinue of men and horses waited here. There were four camels and two elephants in addition.

I spoke to the Sher telling him that the camels and elephants would be quite useless for the journey to Kabul as the road leads through mountains and precipices.

"Never mind" he put in. "In places where the camels and elephants cannot go, my men are instructed to carry them across the more difficult paths."

I stepped back simply surprised to hear such foolish words. Where hardly a bird could find foot — how would these foolish fellows carry a camel, much less an elephant. It meant sure death to travel in company of such a mad retinue. Then I thought of Leela — and Oh how my heart jumped — to think that I was placing my beloved in the hands of barbarious and yet — it was I myself who had come hither, at my own will. I blamed myself a thousand times for the unwise steps which I had taken. However that which was done was done and it was useless to cry over spilt milk. So I consoled myself. Next Leela took me aside under the pretence of saying farewell.

"Have no fear" she said "I will control these lot of idiots and make them leave their elephants behind. Have no fear I say again, my beloved, remember me and if we live we will meet again. Farewell, my dear, Farewell!"

We separated and Leela went to the Sher and said "Now, O Sher, I depart; but one thing more before leaving. Since I lead this expedition, your must make each man fol-

lowing me to swear fieltly to me. My orders must by obeyed." Now I understood Leela's cunningness. The oaths were quickly taken and Leela mounted the elephant's back.

All was ready, but Quack! Coon!! Coon!!! Quack!!!! Quack!!!!

A sound floated to our ears. What was this? It seemed as though a huge poultry farm was coming closer to us. Nor was I mistaken, for coming right in front of us were five men carrying baskets of hens on their heads. I was wondering what this could mean when the Sher spoke to Leela.

"O Madam! With these five men your retinue is complete. They carry hens. Send me a written message each day. Tie it to the foot of one hen and leave it and I think it will reach me."

"Never" I burst out, as I could control myself no longer. Never can a hen reach its destination, because it cannot fly and moreover it would be eaten by wild beasts, if it came running. Pigeons are the proper birds for this work.

The Sher turned to me and politely said "Excuse me Mr.P—I thought I was managing this affair—I mean this expedition."

"I am sorry" I said swallowing my anger.

Now the Sher gave the sign and the procession started. First twenty-five mounted soldiers went, followed by Leela's elephant and camels. Next came the hen men, if I may so call them, and lastly the troop ended in another twenty-five soldiers. I stood gazing silently watching the procession, till it dwindled to a spot in a cloud of dust. An arm was laid on my shoulder. I wheeled round and found myself face to face with the Sher.

"Now Mr. P——"he said "let us in. Rest yourself more, and to-morrow you may start but not before the first hen from your wife reaches us."

He left me in the room and shortly after, a meal was served. I ate and sat thinking. If the Sher intended to detain me till the arrival of the first hen then 'May God bless me.' I had no hopes for it to reach, for how could it. Just imagine a hen to walk twenty-five or thirty miles. Imagine the number of wild foxes, wolves, and cats on the road. Could it escape all? Never! I repeat again.

Such and other thoughts troubled me, till feeling drowsy I went to sleep.

Next morning I was literally pulled out of my bed by the Sher who spoke to me in excited tones, and his face radiating with glee.

"Mr. P.—Mr. P.—my experiment has succeeded. See the hen has brought a message of safe arrival of your wife. She is now thirty miles away—but what is written under the writing—see I cannot read".

He handed me the paper. The top portion I could not read but I could what was written below. It was English. The wording ran as follows:—

Dear and beloved P——I knew that the Sher would not let you go without receiving a hen message from me. So I posted one hen-man about one mile from the Sher's house. I have written many messages with different dates and given them to him. I have instructed him to tie one message daily with one hen's leg and leave it safely at the Sher's house each night, without being seen. So I believe this message will reach you safe enough. Please do not forget me. Your beloved wife, Leela.

I read the espistle once—twice—thrice. Surely the writer was Leela, but what I could not understand was how she knew English. I put on a blank appearance and turned to the Sher. "I cannot read what is written" I said "please read it to me." Thereupon the Sher read as follows:—

"From Leelawati to the Sher-e-Punjab. Greetings. Be it known to you that I have completed to-day's journey and I now stand at a spot nearly thirty miles from your

house. To-morrow I shall send you another script. Farewell till then. Leela. P. S. Tell my beloved Mr. P.—— to commence his work as soon as possible."

"So" continued the Sher "from to-day you start your work". Here are five thousand Swarajis in leather currency notes to meet your expenses with."

"What notes?" I asked "Did you say weather notes?"

"No — No" he said "I said LEATHER Currency Notes. Have you not seen them before? Our mad Government having fallen short of gold and silver has issued these Government notes stamped on leather — each having a value of 1000 (One thousand) Swarajis." I looked at the oblong pieces of leather held out to me. The writing was burned into the leather.

"Well" I said "Good luck to the cobblers and tanners. Soon we shall see them as millionaires."

I took the notes, (if so they may be so called) and pocketed them. The Sher wished me 'Good Day' after remarking that I would find a horse ready, waiting for at the door. I bowed low and withdrew. I came out, mounted the horse, and took the road to Lahore.

At eventide I reached my own dear Lahore, and was just thinking where to go for a lodging, when I heard a voice. It seemed to come from above. I looked up and

found a sentinel shouting at me from the top of a very high tree which stood in the centre of the road crossing. I got down from the horse and accosted a passer by.

"Who is this man" I asked, pointing at the sentinel at the top "and what wants he."

"Stranger" replied the man "It seems you have come to Lahore after some years, as you are ignorant of the new law. Know then that the man on yonder high tree is the **TRAFFIC CONTROL**. From his high seat he sees and controls traffic. At each crossing you will find such a high tree with a man posted at the top. This order was promulgated six months ago.

I thanked him and was about to march off, when a hand was laid at my shoulder. I turned round and saw my old friend Mahasae Bhoot Nath standing in front of me.

"So glad to meet you, my son" he said. "What brings you here?"

"Duty" I replied quite mechanically.

"Come, son, then to my house. O how pleased am I to meet you after such a long time."

"No No -- No No" I said.

My breath came in puffs. I was but an absconding C. I. D. member and if I went to this gentleman's house, matters would become very complicated for me. First he was a Government Official and secondly many others were

coming to his house. I only wanted to get away but the question was how?

"Mahashaiji " I said "please forgive me at present. Since my horse is weary and tired, I must put it in the Government stables and then I will come to you."

"My son" was the abrupt reply "you and your horse are both welcome at my house. Therefore come along."

"But Mahashaj—— " I began.

"Oh please! but me no buts—but come along."

Having said this he took the reigns of my horse and began walking. I followed him to a reasonable distance and then quickly turned into a bye-lane. I had a last look at the Mahashe. Poor innocent soul. He was still walking on and talking to me, though I was not at his side. I ran from the lane and continued running till I came to the other side of the city.

CHAPTER X.

—X—

I BECOME A SADHU.

OF course by now the Mahashae must have noticed my absence. I was now near Taksali Gate, where there is a sort of rest house for travellers and where Sadhus (ascetics) live.

When I reached the first hut of a Sadhu I saw the wise man sitting outside. He had no clothes, except a loin cloth tied round his waist. His long hair fell on his back and was smeared with ashes. His face also was white-washed with ashes. A log of wood smouldered in front of him. There he sat, with closed eyes and folded arms, quite heedless of what happened in the world. Seeing him thus an idea struck me. What if I also disguised myself as a Sadhu? Perhaps then I would be above suspicion and moreover I would be able to carry out my mission more effectively. But to become a Sadhu I must make a Guru or master.

Accordingly I rushed to the nearest sweet-vendor and brought sweets to the value of five swarajis. I brought the basket and laid it at the feet of the Sadhu and proclaimed him Guru before the people.

My prayer or request was accepted. The Sadhu rose, and with his own hands took off all my clothes. Next he anointed me with some ashes. I fell at his feet and thus the ceremony was ended. He gave me a loin cloth to tie round my waist, after doing which I sat down by his side.

"Now son" said the Sadhu "Since you are now my follower by right, your and my secrets must be one." Tell me, therefore, your past history. Who you are? and what was your profession, and why you took up Sadhuism ?

At length I set before him the whole past, true to the word.

"So" he said "you left the world, because it had nothing but sorrows in store for you, but, child, you do not know how difficult Sadhuism is. Though Sadhus are free from sorrow, anger, passion and desire yet, the path is much more difficult than the worldly one. Think, therefore, and revert to thy former life, while yet there is time."

"Bavajee" I addressed him "since I have chosen this path of my own free will, then come what may, I am ready to undergo any difficulties. Nothing will make me change my mind."

"So be it" he said, and proceeded with his prayers.

Next day I received my first lesson. My master asked me a boon. I was surprised to hear my master asking a boon from me. I granted him the boon, saying I would give him what he wanted, if it was in my power.

"Then" said he "you must give me thy desire, that it henceforth you must not desire anything. You must be totally desireless hereafter. You will find it difficult in the beginning, but it is quite easy. You must obey only your senses and organs in future. If you feel hungry, eat. If you feel sleepy, sleep, but you must not desire either. Wealth, power etc. are now far below you."

Though this was a direct blow to the mission, which I had to carry out for the Sher, yet I tried to curb my desire. After toilsome efforts I succeeded. My mind was so balanced within a month that it never wandered elsewhere. The past was forgotten and was like a dream to me. Next month another boon was asked and granted. I had to give up my greed¹ So month by month I lost envy, joy, sorrows, anger and passion.

Thus I spent five long years under the wise guidance of my master. Within that time I became quite a straightforward and simple man. I lived an innocent and pure life and was certainly much happier than the whole world.

At the end of the fifth year, my master one day called me to him. "Son" he said "It is now exactly five years since you have been with me and during this time I have marked your rapid advancement in the path. You have learnt of our lore and you are now a perfect Sadhu. Therefore now I must reveal to you secrets, which are hereditarily yours, as descending from master to pupil, by succes-

sion. But before such terrible secrets be revealed to you, the dread oath must be taken. Therefore prepare thyself for the ordeal.

Accordingly I bathed, and annointed myself. Once more I stood before the master.

"Command" I said "I am ready."

"Then let us hence" he said "we go to Delhi this night and there you shall be told."

CHAPTER XI.



THE SECRET OF PRITHVI RAJ.

WE travelled by the same old trains and reached Delhi the next day at eve. After alighting at the Station my master led me away from the City and it seemed he was heading for the jungle towards the Qutab Minar Tower. I was right. We came to Safdarjang's Tomb and Homaun's Tomb and soon left them behind. Now a funny spectacle came to my view. I turned to my master.

"Master" I said "Is not yon tower the Qutab Minar?"

"Yes" he said "Why do you ask?"

"Because" I said "It seems some accident has happened. See. Can you not see smoke coming out at the top. It seems the tower is on fire. Come let us run -- and try to extinguish it."

And I began running but my master gripped me by the arm and stopped me saying, "Be not rash -- but look before you leap. The tower is not on fire as you say, but the Swarajist Government finding no suitable place in the city have constructed a huge Khaddar cloth manufacturing factory, at yonder place. But see how wise the Govern-

ment is. Instead of erecting a new chimney which would cost thousands of swarajis, it has made use of the ancient Qutab Minar Tower, as a chimney. The smoke which you see coming out at the top, is from the various boilers of the factory."

I was dumbfounded to hear of such a nonsensical scheme. Soon this mad Government would be making the Taj Mahal of Agra a coal store house, I thought.

We walked on till we came to the fort of Prithvi Raj, the great King of India. The fort was now in ruins and in the dim and fading light of the sun, presented a pleasant but sad panorama.

We rested ourselves a while till it was dark when the master spoke to me.

"Come let us hurry. The time is short. Go and bathe in yonder pool and come back immediately."

I obeyed and was back within ten minutes.

"Now" commanded the master "take the dreadful oath, that what you hear now, will not go to other's ears, till you are about to die. At that time you must acquaint your pupil of it as my master too told it to me. If you fail to keep your promise then I curse you and your ten generations. May you never sleep in peace and may this life be a regular hell for you, thereafter. Also the dread curse of Prithvi Raj, the Good King, fall on you, and your breeds. Hear and

tremble for heavy will be thy punishment in this earth, and regular hell and tortures beyond."

I heard and bowed in assent. The oath was taken and the master continued.

"I will leave this world shortly and I am with you but two days more. But before I go I must acquaint you with the secrets, which may save India in time of a calamity. Follow me."

He walked a little and stopped near the northern wall. Now from the folds of his robe he produced a small magnetic needle or compass. He placed it at the foot of the wall and asked me to draw a line at right angles to the wall, and stretching due north. I obeyed.

"Now" continued he. "Walk ten paces along the line which you have just drawn. From that point turn at right angles to the line towards your left and walk on till you come to a corner of the wall."

I did as instructed and when I had come to the wall I called the master. He made a mark where I stood.

"Dig" said he "till you find a ring."

I had hardly dug about a foot, when sure as anything, a ring of brass came to my hand.

"Pull" said the master "with all your might." I set my back to the wall and tugged away. At last my effort was crowned with success. A stone slab moved, I

pulled more, and Lo! it came out. With the help of my master I lifted it right out of the whole.

Below us was a hole about two feet square and leading from this hole downwards were a flight of steps. The Master produced two torches and lighted them.

"Descend" he commanded, but seeing the dark stairs leading God knows where, I hesitated. Seeing this he pushed me aside and took the lead.

After we had gone down about twenty steps we came to a door. The master pressed a secret bottom at its foot and the door opened wide. Now we stood in a passage about four feet broad. The walls were white. I passed my hand over a part only to discover that it was pure white marble. The air was quite fresh I know not how, but the place was very cold.

"Come" said the master "let us hence. It is not wise to stay here long."

At the end of the passage, we came to another door. The master again opened it and we came to a hall. In the dim light of the torches, I could see that the walls were decoratively painted. The floor was of polished marble and had similar designs to the walls painted on it. At the distant end of the chamber, I could see the outline of a door. My master and I were by it. At the top of the

in bold characters of the vernacular. My master read loudly as follows:—

“The sleeping chamber of Prithvi Raj — the ruler of the world. The Sun of Suns. The Moon of Moons. The King of Kings. Peace be to him.”

Awestruck I heard what the master read. Fear overtook me and I trembled. I tried to speak but my voice came in whispers.

“Oh ! Master” I cried “I thought that the good king Prithvi Raj was a Hindu, and according to the Hindu rites his body ought to have been burnt; then how does it lie here, as the writing says? This makes me fearful and I am inclined to return. Such things are best left untouched.”

“Nay” cried the Guru “Fear not. The good Prithvi Raj always longed to lie in this place even when alive. On his death bed he wished to be buried here. His ministers accordingly buried him here in secret and burnt a dummy for show to the public. Now enter beyond.”

He stepped into the next room and I followed. This room resembled the former, but in its middle was a block of black marble carved and inlaid in white stone. On it rested a box of wood about the size of a coffin.

“Look and bow” said the master “There lies the noble king as you shall presently see.”

"Nay Master! Nay. I see not the dead man's face. horrible. Let me go. I am goi——."

But my master caught me and said, "Sorry am I to be such a coward as my pupil. However, since my end near, I have no other go. Come now — Don't be silly. e when I open the box you can close your eyes. Now me this way, so that I may read to you what you ould know." Saying this he led me to the other side of e room. On the wall was a copper plate with writing arved on it.

"Listen" said the master "I will read this to you. I tood all attention and listened to what he read, which ran is follows :-

"Written this sixth day of Magh⁺ in the year 1785 Bikrami* I. Prithvi Raj, the ruler of the world, had a dream. I saw India passing into the hand of the foreigner. It flourished and became strong. The people understood the sciences better and their minds were open. Great men real geniuses were born, and under their wise guidance and control the land became a regular heaven. Corn and eatables were plenty and cheap. Thus the poor also enjoyed their life. But suddenly a shadow came upon the sunlit land. Truth vanished and the hearts of men became pol-

⁺Indian month. About March *The Indian Centuries.

luted. The minds narrowed down and the nation thought that it could support itself, without the help of the foreigner. Pride blinded the eyes, and egoism deafened the ears. Envy closed the senses, and hatred turned the minds. To add fuel to fire, one was born, who said "Rise ye all, I will lead you to drive out the foreigner." The blinded people readily harkened to his voice, to their own undoings. Many attempts were made and many failed. At last the Almighty, gave them what they wanted for their own destruction. The foreigner went and with him went all the good of the land. The people returned to their evil ways, as swine will to the mire. The land now groaned under envy, hatred, and falsehood. The Almighty punished the evil one, who led the people the wrong way with immediate death. Two great religious sects were formed each striving for sovereignty. Now came the ruin of the land. Individuals declared their powers, and the land was divided into petty states. Other foreigners attacked and conquered each of the states one by one. Their rule was oppressing religiously and otherwise. Now the dark curtain of delusion was lifted from the eyes of the people. Now they realised the golden rule of their former rulers. Now they realised that they had taken a foolish and unwise step. Now came the prayers and the penitance. But of no avail. They looked into their houses, but there was nothing left. All was empty. Formerly the peoples were self-made slaves--rather slaves in name. Now they were slaves indeed. The nation tried

to raise its neck against the chains and bondage, but alas! They were too heavy; then came terror and bloodshed in the whole land. The nation wanted to rise but could not. There was no money. I awoke.....

Nou thou unborn one, who will once stand here to read. Listen! Though I am dead and the dark gulf of death and time stretch between thee and me, yet I speak to thee from the grave. By this writing the gulfs are bridged and we are linked. Thus by this link I speak to thee. After having seen this horrible vision narrated above, I set about to collect all the wealth of my kingdoms. This wealth I exchanged for precious stones. These precious stones I have stored in the box which holds my body. All this wealth amounts to the ransom of twenty kingdoms. I have stored this great treasure to meet the needs of India which will come as I saw in my dream. Now if thy heart is pure, and this need of India has come, then open my box and take what I have kept for you. But I warn you that if thy heart is impure, and the need of India is not great or if thou art acting for selfish motives then beware. It is better to return and leave my things untouched otherwise my curse will fall on thee. The curse of Prithvi Raj is great. If you take this wealth for thee then may thou never live to enjoy it. I curse thee and thy forty generations. May thou never know any peace and may thy soul be tormented till eternity. May thou be ruined and drink the bitter waters of anguish all thy life. So much whilst thou livest, but after death, may

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thy sufferings be still greater. May Satan and all evil spirits take thy soul and torture thee till the resurrection day.

Now decide and do as thou thinkest well. But beware of my curse. Greeting and Farewell, Prithvi Raj (King)."

Amazed and horrified I listened. "Master" I cried "Let us hence, for I feel the curse of Prithvi Raj weigh upon me."

"Nay" said the master "Be not afraid but let us sign our document. He walked to the box containing the body and cried "Now close your eyes, while I open the box and take out the document."

I turned my back to him and closed my eyes. I heard the lid of the box grate on its hinges, as it opened—and I thought I heard a groan as though somebody was disturbed from his rest. It may have been my imagination's work in such circumstances or it may have been true. The lid closed with a bang and my master was by me in a moment.

"Here" he said, holding out a paper to me "Sign this and let us hence".

I pored over the sheet held out to me. It contained signature after signature of past masters and pupils. Quickly I affixed my initials to it and the paper was replaced.

'Come Come' said the master "Let us hence. I do not know why I also feel the curse of Prithvi Raj weighing heavy on me, Come ——He staggered, his legs tottered and with a piercing scream he sank to the floor. In a moment I was by him.

"Rise master " I said "Let us go". I tried to raise him, but he fell again.

"Nay son" he blabbered "you fly. Fly from hence I—I cannot go. My end has come, you——"

"Oh" I cried "what is this? I am lonely in such a strange place. How will I reach the world outside again?" I gently laid the master on the ground and covered his face with a cloth. After paying my last respects to him, I took the torches and started to go. The torches were nearly burnt out and it seemed that they would extinguish before I could reach outside. Nor was I mistaken. I had hardly reached the second room when, the torches flickered and died out. I was plunged in darkness. I found the wall and groped along it, hoping to reach the door. I came to the place where I expected to find the door, but — Oh Lord! the door did not come to my hands. In haste I walked faster and at last oh! Joy of Joys. I find it. Thank God it was open. I passed it and found myself at the second door. This was closed, I pushed it and it yielded. Now I was at the foot of the stairs. In haste I mounted and lo! now I was outside.

I drew in the fresh air in great sobs. I rested awhile then pushed the stone back to its place and covered it with earth. After this I walked a little from this place and finding a suitable place slept there till dawn. What were the wonders of the Almighty! See we came two, and now I alone returned.

CHAPTER XII.



DELHI AT ITS WORST.

I awoke. It was dawn. A cold breeze had started and I shivered as it touched me. The birds sang merrily over head. I sat up and began thinking. What should I do? Should I go back to Lahore or stay in Delhi? If I went to Lahore, perhaps I would find a companion. Now that my poor master was dead, I wanted a companion badly. What about Leela? Yes, I had completely forgotten her. Poor creature! How she loved me and how I had repaid her love. No I must try to find her at any cost.

But to do this I must go back to Lahore. Any way since I wanted her I must go. With this determination, I thought of going back to the city and waiting there for the train to Lahore. I reached the Clock Tower, I thought they were repairing it, for, spreading in every direction, at its top, were ropes. The other ends of these ropes were tied to trees, buildings and pegs fixed in the ground. Suddenly a great gust of wind came and the Clock Tower swung violently.

"Look out" I shouted to the people "The Clock Tower is about to fall. Save yourselves".

"See" said the old man "the wise Government separates husk and wheat from here. Each of these coolies which you see, carries a bag of wheat. When he reaches the top of the Tower, he opens the bag and lets out the wheat. The wheat being heavy falls on the ground while the light husk and dust flies away with the breeze. Thus the Government has saved about ten thousand Swarajis, by not purchasing a foreign made sifting machine. Wondrous are the ways our Government."

"Indeed they are" I said and walked away.

Now I took the road to the Red Fort. I had hardly reached the end of Chandni Chowk, when I saw a drum beater coming. Knowing that some State announcement was to be made, I followed him. After making a terrible din at last the man stood still and began announcing.

"Be it known to the Public of India" said he "that our Government, the Indian Republican Association, have come to know that there are some rebels, who refuse to acknowledge the Indian Republican Association. The rebels are spreading discontent amongst the people and trying to cause rebellion. Some members of this gang, are murderers, whilst others are robbers and vagabonds. The gang is responsible for the murder of the Mahatma the late Governor and Chief Judge of Bombay in the past; also for a recent murder of the younger Pandit, who was Judge at Mooltan.

Not only with murders and wholesale robberies in this gang content, but certain members of this gang are inviting foreign powers to attack us, the peaceful people of India. Our worthy Government, the Indian Republican Association, has received WAR DECLARATION Notices from King Amanullah of Kabul, the Soviet Government of Russia, the Shah of Persia, the Khedive of Egypt, the Khan of Baluchistan, the President of America and the Great Lama of Tibet. All of these persons threaten to wage war on us jointly unless we open their trade, that is, unless we buy foreign goods made in these countries. Our worthy Government caring more for the welfare of its people than for peace, has lost no time in calling up a "SQUARE TABLE CONFERENCE" where the representatives of all the above mentioned powers will meet. It is the earnest wish of our worthy Government, to avoid a war, as far as possible. It proposes to increase the subsidies to the various powers. The extra money which will be paid to those powers will be recovered from the people. A war tax of ten Swarajis will be levied per head per month.

will be an open sign. Naturally those who refuse to do so will be shot down as rebels.

To facilitate the shaving, the Government has appointed two hundred state barbers in every city and who have instructions to shave all the people's left whiskers free of all charges".

When he finished, the drum beating started and he marched off.

"Good" I thought to myself. "If foreign powers come and powder these mad fools, they would come to their senses."

I walked on and presently was at the gate of the Red Fort. Why? What was this I saw? Did I see aright or was it an illusion, caused by the hot rays of sun? Where was the left wall of the Fort, I saw some labourers working and I thought that they were carrying out some repairs. I went up to the man in charge and asked him.

"Kind Sir," where is the left wall of our Fort? Has it fallen"?

"Nay oh stranger" was the reply "Our worthy Government has asked us to demolish it. The red stone will be used to make Government quarters, and the wall will be made up again of mud. When it is dry we will paint it red, so that nobody may mark the difference. All the

walls of the Fort will be similarly treated. Wise indeed is our worthy Government.

"Sir" said I "the Government is wise indeed, but perhaps it has omitted to realise that this Fort made of mud will never stand an attack of the enemy."

"Yes" said he "that is correct. But you know that the policy of our wise Government is not to have a war at any cost. Even if it has to pay a few *crores* Swarajis more to other powers, as subsidies. Wondrous are the ways of our worthy Government."

"Indeed they are" I said and began walking onwards.

Presently I was at the Railway Station and for the first time I noticed, that two very high poles stood near the line. A man was sitting at the very top of one pole, and was beating a drum at intervals. Now what could this be? Possibly it was also one of the 'ECONOMICAL' schemes of our wonderful Government. Nor was I wrong. I asked a loitering porter the purport of the poles.

"Stranger" he began, but I cut in sharply.

"I am not a stranger."

"You are" was the undaunted reply.

"I am not".

"You are".

"I say I am not".

"Indeed they are" I said again and walked on.

In Delhi this mad Government had played havoc, yet the idiotic praised this foolish Government. I determined not to see any more ingenious schemes of 'OUR WORTHY GOVERNMENT' so I lay down on the ground and went off to a good sleep. Thus I slept till the train was ready. I got in and soon was rolling on my way to Lahore.

Once again I was in Lahore, that sweet place, land of my birth, land of my forefathers. The land, where I had rocked in cradle. The land where I had grown. Oh Lahore ! Oh Lahore!! How my heart goes out to thee. How I long to be once again in thee. How I long to be once again treading thy sweet lanes and paths. To see thy orchards, overladen with fruits in spring. To hear the birds merrily singing overhead. To see the beloved river Ravi, gurgling with mirth as it rolls by on its endless course. Of all the sorrows, this is the heaviest. I may not, I cannot be in thee, even now, after my awakening.

Well I landed here, and was again standing under the **TRAFFIC CONTROL.**

The city had been decorated and it seemed as though every one was out a 'Merry Making' Each individual was gaily clothed.*National flags were suspended here and there and other banners floated in the air. Flowers were strewn along the roads.

"Friend" I asked a passer by "what means this? Is there a wedding on?"

"Nay stranger" he replied "This--"

"Now look here. If you call me a stranger I will quarrel with you" I put in severely.

"Sorry new com-- eh I mean gentleman" He said "To morrow is a conference day and representatives of all nations meet here to-morrow at a SQUARE TABLE to discuss political matters here with our worthy Government".

I started where I stood and looked at his face. I got another shock. How ugly he looked. He had only half a moustache. Yes, *his left whisker was missing*. Oh! To think of the orders of this foolish Government still makes me shiver. However, I wondered, what the other representatives would say when they saw these mad half shaved owls.

Nay it would be a sight worth seeing. Somehow or other I must attend the SQUARE TABLE CONFERENCE. But how could I? I was but an absconding member of the Government. Perhaps even now the cursed C. I. D. were on a lookout for me. But what if, such was the case—Nay I would dare it. I will go to — to Mahashae Boothnath and gain entrance through him.

With this determination I walked on and after many efforts found out the new house of my old friend and patron Mr. Boothnath.

"Greeting and welcome "to you my son" he cried "nay I forget you are not my son. You are a traitor. What hard times the Gods have sent me. See my service lost, my land and money confiscated, my son turned a traitor. Oh my God what shall I do? But no ! a father's love should not be so easily lost——no I will not let him go this time. I will keep him."

"Oh M. Bhoothnath" I cried "what a bad packet of news do you unfold to me. How did this come about?"

"Oh this foolish Government" he replied "They made me a Judge and then finding fault in my judgment in a certain case thus cruelly treated me. But fear not my son. I have stored against the rainy day. I knew this would happen so I gave myself up to a wholesale bribery and collected as much as possible. So your father is not a beggar after all".

I thanked God, that I had not been the cause of the poor man's downfall. We went in and after taking food we sat down to talk.

"Now tell me, father" I asked "Is this wretched Government on a lookout for me, or am I forgotten? You know it is five years since I am missing."

"Fear not, son" he said "your appearance is so changed that even your own father would not recognise you. Moreover, what cares the state for an employee more or less. So my son you are absolutely safe."

"Well father" I continued "Now to come to the point, I request you to make arrangements for me to attend the SQUARE TABLE CONFERENCE: Even if I die, I must see it."

"Son" he replied gravely "your boon is of a very serious nature, and I do not think I shall succeed. However let me see. now if I go to the Judge, he will disagree with me. Again Laboo Ram the Governor of Bom—"

"What?" I cried "Does he also attend the Conference, if so I am lost. He will recognise me at once and for certain reasons will get me arrested "

"Nay fear not" was the calm reply. "I have hit upon a scheme. It is rumoured that the Representative of Kabul has not turned up till now. Why not take his place?"

I jumped up in horror.

"What?" I cried "I to become the ambassador of Kabul? I to impersonate the AGHA KHAN?" How can I do that without being caught?"

"Yes" came the cool reply "you can, because your father has resources. I will buy you royal clothes and attendants. When the conference has begun, you can come in a grand procession. The people, hearing that you are the ambassador of Kabul, will follow you. Thus our procession will be made. It is settled."

"So be it" I said.

"Then" continued he "I will get along and make the necessary arrangements."

"So be it" I said again, and he departed.

The rest of the day, I idled about in the house and passed an hour or two with the old lady eh? I mean Mrs. Bhoothnath. In the evening the Mahashae returned in the best of spirits.

"Now son" he said "every thing is settled and to-morrow at 10 O'clock, the worthy AGHA KHAN rides in full pomp to the Square Table Conference. I have arranged forty cars bearing number plates of Kabul. Three hundred fine horsemen with spurs of gold, three hundred slaves to complete thy retinue. All this arrangement has costed me five thousand Swarajis."

"Good" I said "Now let us discuss matters. Firstly from where does the procession start and secondly how do I join it?"

"It is all simple" he replied "to-night at about 12 p. m. a party lands near the River Ravi." The tents are pitched and all is ready before dawn dawn people wake up to see His Highness the Agha Khan at Lahore. The news spread and at about 10 A. M. he rides to the conference. You have to get in to your tent in the stealth of the night."

"Agreed" I said and here the Mahashae left me.

CHAPTER XIII.

—:O:—

I IMPERSONATE HIS HIGHNESS THE AGHA KHAN.

—O—

AT midnight the Mahasha came and woke me.
“Come soon” he said “Now clothe yourself in the royal garments which I bring. I will wait outside.”

He left a big bundle on my bed. I opened it and proceeded to don the garbs. First came a long shirt made of fine silk of light blue shade. Over this was a long coat of China Silk of the same colour. The coat was chased in gold all over. On the breast was the crescent and the star of the Mohamadans. This sign was set with jewels, so beautiful that nobody could make out that they were unreal, as the Mahashe later on told me. Over this and last of all came the royal robe, made of the finest purple velvet. It had no sleeves and only had one jewelled clasp to hold it on my person. A ready tied turban completed the upper dress. A baggy pant of double silk formed the suit complete. Now came the boots of the finest leather and

mounted with gold spurs. In half an hour's time I was ready. The Mahashae came in and was shocked.

"Oh son" he said "even I cannot now recognise you. Indeed you are now the Ambassador of Kabul—nay the Prince of Kabul. A car waits outside. Let us hence."

We made our way out and at the door I found the car closely curtained: I got in, and within two minutes we were at the camp gates of the Ambassador of Kabul.

"Who goes there?" challenged a sentinel.

"His Highness the Ambassador of Kabul himself" replied the Mahashae quickly, whereon the sentinel stood at attention and we passed in.

"This way" said the Mahashae pulling me "Your Highness' tent is yonder." I followed and soon we were in the Royal tent.

"Now son" he whispered "rest here a while, but be careful your robes are not soiled." I lay down lightly on the richly furnished bed which had been provided for the purpose.

My mind was not at rest. An ordeal awaited me. Would I get through it? or would I be discovered? I could hardly close my eyes, much less sleep.

Thus I lay awake the whole night. At last it was dawn. The cock crew. I got up and clapped my hands with glee. Almost immediately a slave entered.

He entered.

"Now go and call M. Bhootna——I mean my Secretary who came with me last night."

Before the words were out of my mouth he disappeared. I waited. In about ten minutes time a gaily clad Pathan stood in my tent.

"Your Highness' Secretary awaits your commands" he said. I scanned him. He was certainly not M. Bhoothnath——then who was he? At last he burst out into laughter and spoke in his own voice.

"Excuse me son, I only wanted to test my disguise."

I was wonderstruck. It was the Mahashae himself, but so cunningly had he disguised himself that even I could not recognise him.

"So" I said "do you also attend the conference?"

"Certainly" he said "where goes the master, the Secretary must follow."

"It is well" I said "Now what about starting on our journey?"

"Not yet. Not yet" he said "you must endure here a while yet. The people are fast gathering at the Camp Gates. When the number is sufficient we will start. Moreover the Conference starts at 11 A. M. It is too early yet. Now will your honour inspect the horsemen and guards?"

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I followed him. Near the Royal tent stood a line of finely mounted men. On seeing me they saluted. I went from one end to the other. It was all O. K. I came back to my tent. Just then a messenger was announced. I called him in.

"From my masters the Judges and people of India" he said "to His Highness the Agha Khan, Ambassador of Kabul. Greetings and Welcome in our humble land. The SQUARE TABLE CONFERENCE starts at 11 A.M. The other delegates anxiously await your Highness' attendance."

"Proceed" said I "we will be there in time proper."

He bowed and withdrew. The Mahashae now entered. "Come your Highness, all is ready," Said he. I followed.

Presently we were at the gates. The crowds cheered as they saw me. An elephant stood ready. On its back was a chair of silver lined with the richest of Geneva velvet. I mounted and the Mahashae took his place at my back as my Secretary. In his hand he held a roll and other writing material. Our journey started.

The band went first, playing some fine tunes. Next came the flower men, who strewed my path with flowers. A body of horsemen followed these and lastly came my elephant. Behind my elephant came another body of horsemen and lastly came the people, in *myriads*. As far


as the eye could follow, I saw men, women, and children, all following in our wake.

I remarked one thing that out of this whole multitude there was not even a single Hindu, but all were Mohamadians. This was natural as Kabul is a Mohamadan Country and the Hindus do not quite agree with these.

On the way the Mahashae slipped something heavy into my hands. I looked at it. It was a revolver.

"Keep it" he whispered "perhaps you may need it. I have also got one." I slipped the weapon into the folds of my robe. We continued our journey and were now near the Fort, that ancient building built by the "Maharaja Ranjit Singh".

Presently it was left behind and we triumphantly entered the city. The streets were full of people. Everyone who could walk or be carried flocked round to have a view of the Ambassador of Kabul. Thus we marched, till we came to the Town Hall where the SQUARE TABLE CONFERENCE was to be held.



CHAPTER XIV.



THE SQUARE TABLE CONFERENCE.

THE time was now about 10-45 A. M. Our retinue stopped at the entrance. A bugle was sounded and our messenger announced "His Highness the Agha Khan, by Grace of God, the Ambassador of Kabul. The doors were thrown open and a messenger welcomed the Agha Khan to the humble land.

I alighted from the elephant, and immediately an escort formed round me. We passed the entrance, the Mahashae following on my heels.

Now we stood in the Hall or the 'Council Chamber.' I was shocked – nay dumbfounded – to see it. It was mean and dirty looking. On the ground were spread pieces of sack cloth each about four feet square. I counted twenty-six of them. On each piece was something written in white. I drew near and read, in the following order:—

AMERICA, JAPAN, EGYPT, KABUL, PERSIA,
TURKEY, CHINA, BALUCHISTAN, RUSSIA,
GERMANY, ENGLAND, FRANCE, ITALY.

The other thirteen pieces were all marked India.

I looked back at the Mahashae. He winked and whispered in my ear.

"Really it will be a sight worth seeing when the European Delegates enter. They will kill these fools when they come to know that they have to sit on the ground. Let us occupy our seat."

Accordingly I sought out the sack cloth piece bearing the word Kabul and seated myself on it with the Mahashae behind me.

Ten - fifteen - twenty minutes passed and yet nothing turned up. We waited more and yet no one came. I was about to get up, on purpose of going out to inquire, when a cheering sound reached our ears.

"It must be the other Delegates" I whispered to the Mahashae.

"Yes" he said.

After the cheering was over the door opened and lol before us stood eight to ten Europeans.

Oh ! what a pleasing sight for my eyes ! After how many years I once again saw the European dress and the European people. My heart once again went to the British. How I wished they would come back to India and take the reigns once again into their hands.

Now twelve or thirteen of the Judges took the lead and with many bows and nods welcomed the foreign delegates

to the Square Table Conference. They advanced and I heard one of the delegates mutter.

"Where is this wretched council chamber?"

"Where's the table" asked another.

The Judges pointed each to the carpets of sack cloth. At once, just as the sky is darkened at the coming of a hurricane, the faces of the delegates fell.

"I am not going to sit here — farewell India" said one.

He was about to leave when the others told him to at least see what was going to happen. Now with great difficulty each one sat in his place. Being dressed in pants, it was rather difficult for them to sit on the ground. The Judges also took their places.

I wondered why the Judges had been selected as delegates to the conference, and why not the people?

All were ready and the conference was about to start when "Pan* lo Pan" said a voice. We turned round and saw a man carrying a tray have beetle nuts and beetle leaves for sale. He repeated his cry over and over again when two others joined him "Baraf-Soda-Lemon" shouted one. "Cigarette Bidi matches" roared another.

* A vernacular expression meaning — Buy beetlenuts and beetle leaves.

They created a terrible row.

"I say" said one of the delegates to a Judge who was sitting near him "we are not sitting in a bally theatre. Send out these hum-bugs."

"Sir" replied the Judge. "These are servants of the contractor, who has paid a hundred Swarajis to the State for this contract to sell these things in the Council Chamber. We cannot stop State Revenue. Why not try some of these things say — a packet of cigarettes — or a bottle of Lemon — it would be fine."

"Up gentleman" said one of the delegates — I think it was the American. "Let us hence. We'll show these fools what we can do. They have called us, not to discuss State matters, but to mock and fool us."

"May" said another, possibly Germany. "Let us make these owls, write out, at the tip of a gun, that they have given India to us. One province to each. Draw your revolvers gentlemen."

In a moment all were up, ready with their weapons.

"Now stand up you set of scare crows" said Germany, "and put your hands up."

Like frightened sheep all stood up huddled together, and with their hands above their heads.

"Will you jot down what we ask? Before answering, remember, that if you refuse — you will make a new

acquaintance — that is you will come face to face with a bullet."

"Y — es — yes —" they answered "command, we are ready." A roll was produced and first a list of all the Provinces of India was made.

This was still in progress when a man rushed in head long. So great was his haste that he did not take notice of the drawn revolvers but went right up to the Judges.

"An impersonater, Oh masters" said he. "The Ambassador of Kabul waits outside. Then who is this man?"

But before this man had left, the door opened, and clothed in full royal attire -- stood ———? Was I dreaming or was I awake? Was it Leela I saw? Yes, it was she. After six long years I saw her. How changed and yet the same Leela, beautiful as of old.

"Excuse my intrusion" she addressed the Judges. "But I come under the express commands of my master, by grace of God, King Emperor of Kabul. Our first Ambassador His Highness the Agha Khan must be here. I have special orders for him. Where is he? Someone pointed to me. Leela looked at me. The blood mounted her cheeks for a moment our eyes were one. Then she continued addressing me:

"Your Highness, Our worthy King — commands you through my mouth — that you give the challenge to India

at once and make an attack. Storm the cities and conquer them one by one. I bring men one million in number. Kabul is prepared to face the consequences. These are the orders for you, O Agha Khan".

After saying this she turned to the other Ambassadors. "Gentlemen, will you sit down" she said "and bear witness to the words of Kabul to these fools, the Judges of India?"

Her tone was very commanding and every one obeyed. They pocketed their weapons and sat down on the carpets. She unfolded a paper and read as follows:— From Amanullah, By Grace of God the King of Kabul, to the Judges of India. It has come to my ears, that your system of Government is quite against the likings of the people. You have spoilt the country and reduced it both financially and morally. It has further been made known to me, that you have limited the incomes of the peoples, to thirty Swarajis a month. By taking such measures you have sought your own destruction. The people are dissatisfied. As long as each has earned thirty Swarajis, he works and after, the rest of the month is spent idling. It is rumoured that the railways are on a point of suspending work. Big industries and workshops have already shut down. Terror prevails in the country and you have taken no steps to remedy the dissatisfaction. In the eyes of Kabul, the people

of India are quite incapable to carry on the Government independently. Therefore, with my messenger I despatch my armies. If you come to terms peacefully, and yield the reins of India to my hands, it is well with you. But if you refuse, or offer resistance in the least, then my Ambassador has instructions to challenge you, storm your cities, and conquer your land. This is final. My friend the Sher-e-Punjab is the General of my Army, under my Ambassador the Agha Khan of Kabul. Farewell, Ammanullah."

"Now" continued Leela "Decide you owls, and let me know. But before answering I would warn you, that Kabul is no country to play the fool with. No tricks will do, or otherwise your fate is sealed."

CHAPTER XV



"REPENTANCE."

THEN up and spoke one of the Judges:—"Madam I swear upon India-I Bandit Jalal Niroo—the Muslim —again swear upon India that we are quite prepared to give over the land to our neighbour the King of Kabul. If he rules or we rule it is the same. Fools we were to ask Swaraj from the British; had we known, that such disasters, awaited us, we would have thought twice. Now we are sorry. Now we realise, that theirs were the words and acts of honour and fame and ours are the deeds of fools. Woe be to us. May God forgive us for these sins. Now what face can we show to the British? They would not even care to spit on our land. Alas! Fools that we were. Just imagine, had we known that foreign powers would come and rob our things, in our own houses and in our very presence. Had we only known we would have not done what is now our downfall. Perhaps, Madam, had we kept armies at the Frontiers you would not have thus marched with men into our very home. Alas! We are undone. Oh God, give me instantaneous death to free me from this shame. Alas, only to think that Bharata

(mother earth) will now be ruled by Mohamadans. Farewell—Dharma (religion). Now we shall drink of the bitter waters of penance. Now we shall——”

“Enough, oh coward” thundered another judge. “We have heard enough. Where were you so long? Perhaps dreaming. What were you doing when the British ruled, you boaster? Do you remember how when the Mahatma recommended non-violent measures, you disagreed with him, and forced the people to adopt violent measures. Where then is that force now? Where are your bomb-makers now, who were numerous when the British ruled? Cowards like you, they have all disappeared at the coming of trouble, and leaving India to its fate. You boaster, you are cause of India’s ruin. Why be sorry now? Your lectures, to the public to spread discontentment, where are they now? All is lost. Done is done, and now we deliver India to Kabul. It is said”.

“Not so soon. Not so soon.” said one of the European delegates “we are still here. What about us? We shall not leave till we get.....”

“Nobody gets anything” thundered a voice at our back. All turned to see the speaker. With a revolver in each hand there stood the Sher-e-Punjab. I recognised him after so many years. He laughed when he saw me, then continued: “You are all my prisoners, till I have attained complete control of India, all of you remain here. This

building is strongly guarded. If any one tries to escape—Woe to his head. The Ambassador of Kabul, may however follow me.”

Leela and myself were at his side in a moment. He led us out. No one spoke anything. The Sher came out and banged the door. The guards immediately put on heavy locks to the doors.

“O my dear, O my dear” cried Leela and clung to my neck weeping. “After how many years, do my eyes behold you? O those five long years! How I wept and spent. I never thought of seeing you again. I — — I — — thought you dead, but when I saw you in yonder Council Chamber, I got new life. My first impulse was to fly to you and cling to your neck, but I controlled myself. I postponed it till I had delivered my message. O those minutes. How weary they were? Each minute seemed a year to me! At last they ended, and now we are together.’

“Leela” I said “can you talk of nothing else but love, at such a time, when the destiny of nations, hangs by a weak silken thread? May I tell you, this is no time for personal fancies or hates. Dark clouds loom over India. They may pass away, or shower down torrents of ruin on the land, and wash away in a flood of disaster the good people of India. Act therefore and act at once to save it, if it lies in your hands. Argue with the Sher, persuade him to release the European Delegates at least. Otherwise his fate

and the fate of India is sealed. There will be a world-war, and each nation of the world will march in triumph across the land, spreading ruin and disaster, in its progress."

"Nay love" she said "be not annoyed with me, who am but your handmaiden. Your will is my will. Let us go to yonder rest house, and talk matters over. I have a lot to tell you."

We went to the inn, and were led to a room where we sat down.

"Now" said I "hurry up and tell me all you have to say. The time is short."

"Listen" she proceeded "from the time you left me, I marched on and on towards Kabul. After a weary journey of three long months, I reached the capital. The king was kind enough to grant an audience on the seventh day after my arrival. I told him the purpose of the Sher, but he laughed openly in my very face, and told me that Kabul needed no help from anyone, to conquer India. It was only a week's work, but he was watching and seeing if the Government improved. As long as the Government did not pass any Laws, contrary to the *Islam religion*, he had no mind to interfere. But should this happen, then he would not lose a minute's time to march down the Khyber. As you know, that this mad Government passed orders obliging the loyal people to shave off half the moustache and

beard. This reached the ears of Kabul and as a matter of fact about five thousand Mohamadans went from here and waited on the King. They told him it was against their religion to shave their beards, so they asked his help to mete out this Swarajist Government. If he did not agree to their terms there would be a civil war in India. At first the King was troubled on hearing this, but later his strong will worked out a plan. He sent his Ambassador the Agha Khan and myself, asking India to remove this law, failing which, he would wage war. Somehow or other the Sher came to know of the coming of Agha Khan. Accordingly he took a strong body of men and kidnapped the Agha Khan. There he still lies a prisoner. Now see how active his spies are. Well, the news reached the Sher that you were impersonating the Agha Khan at the Square Table Conference!

"So" I said "he knew that I was to attend the Conference in disguise".

"Yes" she said "he knew all. Accordingly he came to me the same afternoon and acquainted me of this fact and O dear! how pleased was I to hear that you were there. Well, the Sher asked me to go with certain forged orders of Kabul to the Square Table Conference. Seeing the seriousness of this crime, at first I refused whereon the Sher got angry with me. "If" said he "you do not obey me, you will never see your beloved P—again. I will send another man in your place with the orders, and I will command him to

kill P—before he returns”. On hearing this I was terrified. Of all the things I possess in this world, I could not afford to lose you. My woman’s courage flamed up in me and I agreed to undertake the hazardous task. Then you know what happened later. How I read out the false orders of Kabul, and challenged India, asking you to wage war.”

“But” I asked “why did the Sher, then come personally? He ought to have waited for the results.”

“Ah !” she said “The Sher doubting the issue of his plans, and thinking that I may betray him, supervised the affairs himself. Perhaps you did not mark. When I was reading the orders, the Sher stood behind you, and listened to all. He had a strong force waiting outside, and if anything out of the way occurred, he would have attacked immediately. His army is as strong as ever. Since the Shaving Law has been promulgated, more and more Mohamadans are joining his force.”

‘Then, up Leela’ I said “this is no time to discuss matters. Let us see the Sher immediately. After all we must not let India pass into a robber’s hands. If he comes to terms so much the better for him, otherwise I have means to take India from his hands,” and I looked at her meaningly.

We departed from the inn and were soon at the residence of the Sher asking for admission at his door.

Presently we were ushered to his presence. There he sat on the ground with two revolvers lying on either sides. At his back stood armed men. In front of him was a tray with glasses and bottles.

"So," I whispered to Leela "now he has given himself up to drinking?"

"Yes" she replied softly.

The Sher's face was set and fierce. His eyes, which normally had a murderous look, were now blood-red. It seemed he was in a passion. Occasionally he gave a violent twist to his moustaches, as though challenging someone.

Suddenly, a cloud set on his face. It became dark, like the sun-lit sky darkening at the coming of a storm. His features contracted and his fists clenched. Anyone could see that he was in a great rage. He waved his hand, in a commanding manner.

"Go" said he to one of his guards, "bring the prisoner. It seems I must annoint my throne with blood, before mounting it."

The guard obeyed, and was gone in a moment. The Sher took a good long draught from the bottle, and now sat gently rocking himself to and fro. Obeying some sudden impulse, he gave a violent kick to the bottle and glasses lying in front of him.

"Ho Guards! Throw out these" said he, pointing to the broken pieces of glass.

The Guards proceeded to carry out his orders when someone announced the prisoner.

"Bring him in at once" shouted the Sher and using the Royal 'we', continued pointing to himself "We are quite ready to do justice."

CHAPTER XVI

THE MURDER OF SIR RATINDRA NATH TABOKE

THE prisoner was brought in. I looked up, and fell back shocked. Great Heavens! This was the great Poet and Philosopher Sir Ratindra Nath Tabore. How came such an innocent and saintly person to be a prisoner of a robber like the Sher. In horror I gripped at Leela's arm.

"Dear" I said "let us hence. Methinks the Sher's intentions are evil."

"Nay" said she "let us wait and see the issues. If the Sher means evil let us try to persuade him by argument."

I nodded in assent. The prisoner stood before the Sher and looked boldly at him. He seemed much older than his years now. His snow-white beard was ruffled and fell on his breast. His silken white hair reached his waist. He had a common garb or long robe which reached his ankles. Undoubtedly this man had a royal and commanding air about him. The Sher felt it. Twice he strove to speak and twice his heart failed him. Not till he had taken another draught of wine was he able to speak.

"Now what hast thou to say thou white-haired owl?" said he "Speak, as thy time is short."

"Nay" said the sage "Ask me not. Say rather, what thou hast to say, to defend thyself against the wrath of God. Rather, thy time is short, for, God's hand is long and no one knows when it is going to grip him."

"High indeed, are thy words and mean, but I forgive thee both, if you accept the faith".

"What!" said the sage " I too become a Mohamadan? Never. Never in all my life will I agree to such a base proposal. Oh Sher, think you well: think not that thou art the only supreme power in India. If my religion is true, God's punishment to you will be swift. What benefit wilt thou get by polluting other religions? Nay, its horror, a hideous crime I say. If thou wilt pursue this course, then is India ruined. Better were the British, in whose time religion was at liberty. Nay, Sher. Nothing is lost. Desist from this ruinous path and thy days will be blessed. If thou failest, then doom, misery, and sorrow will be thy end. Perpetual tortures, will be thy share. Thy ten generations will be cursed and thy—".

"Hast done thy croaking—thou raven in a peacock's dress". Interrupted the Sher boldly. "Enough of thy prophecies and curses. I ask thee once more, wilt thou accept our faith of Thy own free will Before answering, re-

member, that if though sayest "Nay" then thy fate is sealed, for I have means to convert thee."

"Nay, Sher" said the sage. "Be not so sure. Yet there is heaven above us; who knows how the scale of affairs turns? Perchance thou mayst have to change thy faith and—".

"Enough—enough" said the Sher "waste not our precious time——. Ho guards! bring in a cow, and I will show this white-beard how to change his religion".

His command was immediately carried out and within a few moments the cow stood near the sage.

"Who is this?" asked the Sher addressing the sage and pointing at the cow.

"Art thou blind" was the calm answer. "Knowest thou not thy mother, who feeds mankind with her milk of love, till death?"

"Ah — Ah" said the Sher "So white-beard thou dost recognise thy mother, though to me she is not even an aunt. Well now, suppose I killed this — thy mother in thy very presence. What then? or suppose I offer thee terms to spare thy mother if thou dost convert to Mohamadanism. Wilt thou agree?"

The Sage started where he stood on hearing this. Now was the time to test his reasoning. Should he agree

to accept the Mohamadan faith and thus save the sacred cow or should he refuse and let a cow be slaughtered in very presence? Both were sins. He could choose the lesser of the two evils. But which was less? Both were equally great. He was between the fen and the fire. He appreciated the seriousness of the moment. His face turned ashen white. He turned to fly, but the guards were behind him. He spoke not a word. There he stood as mute as a statue. Would he speak again? I doubted. At last thank God he spoke.

"Oh Sher" said he "hast thou no fear of God, that thou dost thus persecute me? What will ye, if I become a Mohamadan? What good will come out of it?"

The Sher looked up at the prisoner.

"Well, white-beard! I wish thee to become a Mohamadan so that thy followers may likewise come to the side of Islam. The public seeing these changes may also change their minds and become Mohamadans. Thus India will slowly become an Islamic country, and perhaps one of the chief pillars of the religion."

The sage blinked, while the Sher spoke. At last the proceedings reached a climax. The Sage spoke in simple tones.

"Oh, Sher! Sorry am I to tell thee that thy hopes are vain and thou strivest for nought. There are millions of

Hindu patriots in India who would never leave their religion even under the sword and who would willingly sacrifice their lives for religion. Even if each had a thousand lives he would willingly lay it one by one under the executioner's torture wheel, for the sake of religion. Therefore, I blankly refused to accept thy faith. Do what thou wilt."

The Sher's face worked up into a fury. He stood up and pointed at the cow.

"Oh guards!" said he "kill this beastly animal which this man names as his mother, and pour the hot blood in his mouth —Nay bathe him with it."

The executioner lifted his sword to strike and lo! a miracle happened. The sage thought better of it. Taking conversion to Mohamadanism as evil as allowing the cow to be slaughtered he thought of sacrificing his own life.

There!—— he dealt a blow to the executioner and now he kicked the Sher. Why? Was he mad? He dealt blow after blow and to the guards and yet no one sought to defend himself. Why? He was like a Lion. Seeing his courage, in a bound, I was at his side. The blood boiled in me, and now I fought breast to breast with the sage, beating down the guards one after another.

Leela shrieked and called me back, yet I would not listen. There we fought, till, I think, all the guards were

down. The sage caught an empty bottle and dealt a blow to the Sher on his head which stunned him. Now we two stood as conquerors of the field.

Suddenly Leela pointed to our back and uttered a piercing scream. We hastily turned around and were terrified to find the guards standing near the doors and covering us with daggers. Each had a long knife in his hand. Slowly—yet slowly they advanced, then with a sudden movement, they pounced on us. Already we were in their midst. My throat was bared and a knife shone above it.

"Strike" said the Sher who had by now recovered himself.

I heard a groan and looked towards the sage and Oh horror! His head all red with blood lay on the floor. Without a struggle, without a groan, the body of the murdered sage sank to the ground. I looked and looked. Now it was my turn. The knife was raised. I closed my eyes and prepared myself for death. God knows why I opened my eyes once more, perhaps to have a last look at Leela.

Our eyes met and in a moment she understood. With a cry she jumped headlong into the fray. Due to the impetus we both fell to the ground. She covered me, placing herself between me and the knife.

"Mercy, Sher" she panted "Show mercy."

The Sher laughed and signed to the guards.

"Spare him" he said "He has helped me in the past and I forgive him his rashness."

I stood up with Leela at my side. The Sher got up and walked to us.

"Dost thou then hold thy life so light as to throw thyself headlong into the very jaws of death" he asked.

"Nay' oh Sher" I replied. "I only wanted to spare the sage."

"See that thou do it not again. Thou art a brave man and I love to keep man at my side, hence I forgive thee" he said; then turning round he looked at the murdered sage.

"Pah !" said he "He has an ugly look. Ho guards! take away this carrion and fling it to the kites."

After the room was cleared, he asked Leela, why she had come. She was about to reply when some one called to the Sher. We turned round.

thou remember, that when the British ruled, I always told the public in all my speeches, that as soon as India attained Swaraj, I would go away to the hills and pass the rest of my life in the hills as a Sadhu. Accordingly when India got Swaraj, I expressed my wish of leaving the reins of Government to the people, and going away to the hills. But the people would have none of it and insisted on my staying in Bombay to rule over them. I was tempted to listen to the people, but my conscience would not allow this. Accordingly, I set myself thinking and at last hit upon a scheme. In a certain Film Company in Bombay, there was an actor who resembled me. I went to this man and after much persuasion, made him agree to act my part as Chief Judge and Governor of Bombay. It was this man who was murdered in Bombay as the Mahatma. All these long years, since that time, I droned away my life as a Sadhu in a shrine. A few nights back I had a dream. I saw India, a sunlit land. Suddenly the heavens turned red and showered blood on the land. I awoke terrified. Taking this as a sign from God, I knew India was in troubles, and thus you dragged me down the slopes of the mighty Himalayas, once more into this sinful world."

"I ? dragged you down the mountains" asked the Sher, pointing to himself. "Nay, Oh Mahatma ! I seek not your help, neither as thou sayest, did call I thee."

"But" said the Mahatma "thine actions and deeds are ruinous. Thou art supposed to protect India; but thou art about to betray India. All the powers of the world, whose representatives thou hast imprisoned, furious with rage, will attack India. Field after field will be fought and won. Thus our motherland will pass into other hands and will be ruined. Therefore, I command thee" continued the Mahatma putting on a more serious face "to release all whom thou hast unjustly imprisoned to meet thine own evil ends and—"

"—And who the devil are you to command me thus" burst in the Sher losing his temper. "Dost thou know to whom thou art speaking? Dost thou dare to defy the lion in his very den? Knowest thou not, that if I wish it, thou wilt be no more. I could plan secret and swift means to end thee, in a moment's time."

"Thou art right" said the Mahatma "but to kill me, requires no deep thinking or secret planning. Here I am before thee, strike if thou canst. Before acting, think. The people of India are revengeful, and if they come to know this then woe be to thine own head."

These simple words of the Mahatma had a magical effect on the Sher. He staggered, when he heard this. He moved back—back till the walls stayed him. He stretched out his hands as though to ward off the words. Anger left him and fear caught him in its grip. He cow-

ered before the Mahatma. Now he spoke. "But, Oh Mahatma" said he, "be not cruel to me thus. I desire to be the king of India. I have sinned for it, I have prayed for it, I have worked for it, I have bribed for it, and what is more I have nearly earned it, when, suddenly thou appearest like a phantom before me. Have pity on me. Consider each point, weigh each fact and then act."

"I have thought" said the Mahatma. "My words are final : It now remains for thee to think: Either agree to release the prisoners and save India or keep them and ruin India. Do as thou pleasest, but I warn you" continued the Mahatma, working himself into a fury and advancing toward the Sher, with a warning finger "that if thou dost fail to save India, then cursed be thou. Never mayst thou sleep in peace but mayst thou be tortured for ever and ever in this world and beyond.

The Mahatma ceased. The Sher again implored the off like Mahatma to give in, but to no avail. When the Sher saw his castle of hopes, which he had built in years of labour, being blown off like chaff at the coming of the hurricane of the Mahatma's strong will, he became desperate. His courage came back to him. Evil mounted his face. His hands clenched and his whole frame shook with wrath. He advanced where the Mahatma stood.

"Oh Mahatma" said he "I prayed to thee, begged of thee, but thou art as hard as a stone. Therefore seeing death staring at me on both sides I have decided to take

the worst of the two measures, to achieve my ends. Come what may. Ho guards" continued the Sher calling his men "Seize this man" and he pointed to the Mahatma "take him to the cellar, where lies the long legged Agha Khan. See that they talk to no one, nor should any one know of their confinement."

The guards bowed and advanced towards the Mahatma. Seeing them advancing the Mahatma was terrified. His face turned white and his legs gave way beneath him. "Wait, Wait Oh Sher" he blabbered. I—I agree to your terms if——."

"That time is gone" calmly added the Sher.

The Mahatma struggled violently as the guards let him out, but he could not succeed in freeing himself. Once more the Sher asked us our business. I was not prepared — Nay I had forgotten why I was there. I looked stupidly at Leela. She understood, in glance. Wondrous and wayward, are the ways of women.

"Oh Sher" she cried "We come to ask thee our reward.

Thy work is done and thou art on to the verge of being crowned king. We seek not your treasures but simply thy protection."

He looked at us widely then obeying some impulse he laughed "Good" said he "I was just thinking of this. From this day onwards you are both my ministers. Ho

guards——" the guards appeared. "Announce" continued he "to all my armies and subjects that these persons are my ministers from this date. All must respect and obey them. The guards bowed and withdrew. The Sher turned to Leela and again asked "Anything more Madame — which I can I do for you?"

"No, thank you" said Leela.

"Then you may go" said the Sher waving his hands toward the door. Leela started, but I checked her "Leela" I said "you have done nothing for those poor prisoners." "Nay — —" she broke in "excuse me if I say that you are a bit of a simpleton. I have more than spoken to him; we are now his prime ministers and all his men will obey us. This night we rescue all, including the Mahatma and the Agha Khan." "Brave girl" I could not help saying, and my eyes watered. Hand in hand we passed out of the room. At the entrance as we came out, the guards bowed low to the ministers of the Sher. For the remaining part of the day we rested at the inn. Leela troubled me a lot with her sighs, kisses and tears. However the evening came. I shook Leela, who was just dozing off into a slumber. "Up" I said "Let us hence, the time is ripe." "Nay" she replied "Endure here a-while more; not, till it is perfectly dark should we move out."

I sat down again. Being depressed, as every one is, at the coming of adventure, I started up a conversation

"Nay" I replied "I take not the Government in my hands, rather let us settle with the British delgate secretly to-night to take India in his hands for England."

"You are mistaken" she said. "He would blankly refuse any help or protection to India from England's side. They want to teach India a lesson."

"But if we argue with him and persuade him I think that after all an Englishman has a kind heart and he would agree. Why I forget, the Mahtama is a personal friend of his, since many years. You remember he was once the Viceroy of India when the British ruled."

"His name?" she asked. "Perhaps I can recollect, if you give his name."

"Sir Charles Maxwell" I replied.

"Oh yes" she answered. "Now I remembered perfectly well. Why? He was the last Viceroy of India when Swaraj was granted."

"Yes" I said "the same. Now it is dark, let us be going, first to the Mahatma from thence to the foreign delegate." Leela got up and we went out.

"Who is the real ruler at this time " I asked presently as we walked along.

"Why? No one" she replied. The Judges are prisoners, so that is the end of the Indian Re-publican Association. May be the Sher, who rules to-day.

"I think so " I said.

Now we were just near a cross road, and seeing a guard of the Sher, we went to him. He recognised us at once and bowed low saying "What are your orders. Command, I am here to obey."

"Well" I replied "lead us to the Mahatma's prison chamber. We have urgent state affairs to discuss with him".

The guard bowed and walked ahead. We followed. Of course this poor man was obeying the Sher's order, to obey and respect us. We presently came to the Sher's residence, and turning to our left from here, we walked up straight along a narrow and winding lane. The guard walked on till we came upon a building. Here the guard stopped to talk with another guard who was on duty. After a few minutes, both the guards with many bows and nods of the heads, asked us to enter the Mahatma's prison chamber. We stepped in. All was dark.

"Bring a lamp" I ordered.

The guard immediately got one and I looked at the face of the Mahatma. He seemed to be terrified on seeing us. "Who are you and why do you come at this time of the night" he asked half getting up.

"Fear not Mahatmajee" I cried. "We come to discuss state matters with you. Wait outside " I added turning to the guards.

... "Yes, Yes" he said "nothing can be done now. However, as you say, I will see Sir Charles Maxwell."

"Then let us hence" put in Leela.

"Come" I said, leading the way.

At the gates, we were affronted by the guards. They stood in our way, but, at a word from Leela, moved aside, and we all three passed out.

"Which way?" asked the Mahatma presently.

"Here this way, to the Town Hall" I replied leading the Mahatma by the hand.

"Thank you----thank you" he said "ah! these glasses of mine— they are so dirty. I can hardly see through them."

"Nay O Mahatma" put in Leela "it is not the glasses that are to blame, but it is actual darkness due to there being no lights on the road".

"And why does'nt the Government put the lights?" queried the old one.

"Because" replied Leela "many travellers were attacked by robbers on the roads, when there were lights. The Government seeing this, thought of a scheme. They abolished the lighting of the roads, more, to save money, than for the safety of travellers. The plea put forth is, that if there are no lights on the roads, the robbers would not be able to see travellers passing, so there would be no chances of attack."

"Foolish--absolutely foolish" put in the Mahatma. "why? it seems the Government is going mad. Ah! I forget that the Government is no more All the judges are in prison, but how foolish for them to have such ideas. See darkness on the roads, is what is most desireable to robbers, besides, being unsafe for the travellers."

"Yes Mahatmajee" I said, "this is but one of the foolish schemes, of the Indian Swarajist Government, which you see here. There are thousands of such other silly systems."

"I see" said the Mahatma "but always remember that bad men have a bad end, so, with this Indian Swarajist Government".

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MAHATMA'S CONFESSION.

THUS conversing we reached the Town Hall. We walked round, till we came to the door. It was closed, and near it stood a guard. We went up, but the Mahatma cunningly went ahead to where the guards stood, then, turning round, bowed to us, naming us 'The Ministers of the Sher.'

When the guard heard this, he also bowed and said "Command, I am here to obey."

"Open the door" I said, a bit sternly.

The guard after fumbling for about five minutes in the darkness, at last succeeded in opening the locks.

We were about to enter, when, a voice cried "Halt! come no further, or you'll have an ounce of lead in you".

In a flash I understood, it must be the delegates, who, tired of being kept prisoners for so long a time, had become desperate, and seeing the door open, wanted to make good their escape.

"Hold, gentlemen hold" I said "we are friends, come to rescue you. Leave not this room, under pain of death. If you are found in the streets or elsewhere you will be shot down. Such are the Sher's orders but be careful of those silly fellows, the so called Judges and Governors of India. See that they do not escape."

We heard a whispering sound, and some grumbling. Finally someone spoke in pure English.

"It indeed, you come to save us, then, we are willing to do what you say, but remember if we see anything out of the way happening, then woe to your heads. We will shoot blindly."

Now the Mahatma advanced and went into the room. All was dark but yet, he somehow or other managed to walk in. After a while we heard him speaking.

'Where——where is Mister, um I crave his pardon, I mean Sir Charles Maxwell. I want to speak to him.'

"Here" said somebody "who wants me?"

"I I the Mahatma, want to speak to you".

"Then here I am, speak—say, what you want" cried Sir Charles Maxwell, pushing his way out and coming to the front.

"Sir Charles, you know me, I am the Mahatma, the late Governor and Chief Judge of Bombay. I come to you, to request you, on behalf of the people of India, to forgive us and take us once more under protection of England. We have sinned against you, and have suffered enough in these long years of sorrow and misery. Be merciful, as the Lord is, and keep not in your heart the past. God will reward you, for this your kindness, to an ungrateful lot of people. Your days will be blessed and long will England have its sway over foreign possessions."

since you are the man to lead us and the people into this" and I looked at him meaningly.

He blinked through his spectacles at me and then spoke.

"Forgive me. I was but over hasty. It is but your kindness if you get us out of troubles."

"Alright then let me have a word with Sir Charles" I cried turning round.

"Now, Sir Charles" I said "how do you come, I mean on what ship?"

He thought over, then calmly replied "why? on England's own steamship. I mean S. S. Miss England. This ship is a man-o-war and is reserved to carry ambassadors only. She lies at anchor at Bombay just about five miles from the shores."

"And how many men are on board and what are they by profession" I asked.

"Well" he said "to speak the truth there are about a five hundred men on board, nearly all of whom are soldiers fully armed."

"Good" I said "now suppose you go to Bombay, how will you inform the crew that you have arrived, because, as you say the ship is five miles from the shores?"

"Why? it's easy" he said "I have got my set, I mean my wireless portable transmitter with me" and he slapped his pockets.

"So is this transmitter so small that you can carry it in your pocket?"

"Yes, yes" he said "this is no ordinary receiver. A well known scientist of England, by the name of Sir William. S. Isaacs, made it and presented it to His Majesty the King as a novelty which had not been made up to the time His Majesty was highly pleased and rewarded the scientist well. On my departure from England His Majesty remarked that he would give me some thing, which would save my life in trouble, and saying this he handed me this set. Ever since the time I have possessed it, it has proved very useful, and here it is".

So saying Sir Charles produced a small box from his pocket. I looked at it. It was perfect in every detail and yet was so small. There was an arrangement for wireless telephony as well as telegraphy. What more I discovered that it could be used as a receiver as well, for attached to its base, were a small pair of head phones.

"Indeed it is a real marvel" I could not help saying.

"And so it is" said Sir Charles "but you have not yet discovered its real beauty and that is that it requires no earth nor aerial. Simply press this button to switch on the current and then do what you like. Either send or receive messages, and it carries about a thousand miles easily as a transmitter."

The wavelength is 50 metres. It is a real marvel".

"I have heard enough, Sir Charles" I cried "now if you just pay attention to what I say, you will realise that my scheme is really marvellous. First you should ask your men to come to Lahore. This message may be transmitted through this little set. I am sure they will catch your signals"

"Yes" replied Sir Charles "indeed they will catch my signals, but the question is how will they come? You just told me that the railways had suspended work. Moreover even if the trains were working, it would be impossible for five hundred men to come together without arousing suspicion."

His argument was right. I thought over the whole thing, but my brain was unable to suggest a scheme. At last after many efforts, I thought of a stratagem.

Ah! I have it." I cried, addressing Sir Charles "isn't there a big aerodrome in Arabia, belonging to the British? Suppose, now you instruct your ship to send a distress call to this station in your name asking for help. They would surely respond and send immediate help. At the very start you could ask for two big airplanes with fully armed men. Arabia is not far and the aeroplanes would reach here before sunset tomorrow. In the meanwhile all of us must remain hiding here."

"Oh I understand you now" said Sir Charles "you mean that these two 'planes may come, and take me away to safety. But you forget about this poor bloke the Mahatma. He should also escape, otherwise that scoundrel, the Sher, will give him 'a short shrift and a tight cord' before he knows where he is."

"No, Sir Charles" I replied "I don't mean that you should leave India so soon. You know that India is in an unsettled condition now, why not conquer it once again? Two 'planes are ample if they are well equipped with ammunition."

Sir Charles fell to thinking, and in the meanwhile I kept quiet. In my memory I also went over each scheme and plan rapidly. I came to the conclusion that if Sir Charles agreed to my proposal there were no chances of failure.

I was still thinking when my attention was drawn towards the Mahatma. Why? he got up and came to where Sir Charles was sitting. He folded both his hands as we do while praying, to Sir Charles.

"Oh, Saviour" he sobbed with tears in his eyes "refuse not the request of this young man. If you take India into your hands once again, at least I will die in peace. Therefore listen to my prayer and accede. See I will fall at thy feet and worship thee."

So saying the Mahatma, yes ! that great man of India, threw himself at the feet of Sir Charles and clung to them.

"Rise—rise Oh Mahatma" cried Sir Charles, trying to get his feet free of the Mahatma "why it shames me to think of it. A great man like you trying to be silly and childish like this. Don't think that we British keep anything in the heart. We are an open minded people, having a frank heart in us. To prove this to you, go, I agree to your request. Go ! it is said."

Now the Mahatma's face lit up, just as the sky is lightened at the coming of dawn.

"Oh thank you awfully Sir Charles" he said "my tongue has not the power to express my gratitude to you. However now act at once".

"Now Sir Charles" I put in "let us begin with the business."

"Alright" he said "I begin at once".

He put his wireless transmitter on the ground, and sat down near it. Now he manipulated the telegraph key, and went on doing so for a long time. Of course he had put on the pair of head phones and was waiting, I suppose, for a response from the other end. Suddenly his face changed its expression and he steadily listened.

"I have got it at last" said he, turning to me "it's the ship. Please give me a pencil and paper".

He handed him both. Now his hand slowly traced out the following :—"Go on—we follow."

The hand stopped writing, but the other hand continued signalling. Now he changed hands, and began sending signals very rapidly with his right hand. He continued thus for about half an hour and in the meanwhile no one spoke. At last he got up.

"Well old specks" said he, turning to the Mahatma "be happy now. Within twenty-four hours, you will see the 'planes arrive, and then once again the Union Jack will fly over India".

"Oh how pleased am I" replied the Mahatma.

"Now gentlemen" cried a voice at our back "do you think of going to bed. It is near dawn, and you can safely pass the day in sleep. Of course the Sher will find out your absence in the morning, and then will begin, the search, but you are as safe as in a temple. His great-great-ancestors could not hunt you out from here."

We turned round to see the speaker. It was the Mahashae. We had forgotten all about him and unnoticed he had slipped out of the room.

"And where have you been to, Mahashaejee" I asked.

"Oh I had been to my dearie 'um I crave her pardon—I mean to my my—Mrs."

"Yes Mahashae, the Sahib seems to be sleepy. Please arrange the beds" put in the Mahatma pointing at Sir Charles before I could reply. I presumed that he being old, felt more sleepy himself than the Sahib.

We lay down in the same room, and all were soon lost in sleep.

CHAPTER XX.

INDIA REGAINED.

A Roar suddenly woke me up. What was it. It soon came to my memory. It must be the 'planes.

I jumped out of my bed and went to where Sir Charles lay, still fast asleep.

"Get up! get up!" I cried" the 'planes have arrived.

He woke up and took the news very calmly.

"Oh they must be signalling" replied he pointing upwards. "I must listen to them and instruct them what to do."

Accordingly he once more sat at the wireless set and wrote out the following message. "As per your instructions, two 'planes are at your command. One of these 'planes is fitted with a gyroscope. We know the situation of the building in which you are imprisoned, by the wireless direction finding apparatus, installed on board. We await commands."

I read the message, and patted Sir Charles on the back.

"Good luck" I said."

"Yes" he replied "good luck indeed. You see one of the 'planes is fitted with a gyroscope, that is, this 'plane can descend vertically downwards or ascend vertically upwards.

without moving forwards. It can even alight on our roof. Now what should I ask them to do?"

"Sir Charles" I replied "before instructing the pilots, let us think over our whole plan well. Let us awake the Mahatma, and take his advice"

"You need not wake me. I am quite awake. Say what you want to" said the Mahatma jumping out of his bed.

"Now Mahatmajee" I cried "the planes have arrived and Sir Charles has already communicated with them."

"Yes, Yes" he said "I have heard all. Do as you think best. I have sworn an oath to myself last night that I will never poke my nose into politics any more."

I looked at Sir Charles and he looked at me. What could we reply to such a determination.

"Alright" he said addressing the Mahatma "you may rest your bones while we manage the whole affair, and now Mr. P.—" continued he turning to me "let us settle it between ourselves. I think the most advisable thing to do is to ask the pilots to distribute small notices to the public from the air. The contents to run something like this. 'To the public of India. Capture the Sher and give him over to us for justice before 4 p.m. otherwise we bombard Sir Charles for England'"

"Splendid idea." I cried "please start at once."

"Alright " he replied and began sending the message on the wireless set again. Within five minutes he had finished and now we anxiously awaited the result. Sir Charles kept his head phones on, perhaps to pick up the signals in case he was called. The Mahatma was as dumb as the Sphinx, nor did he speak till eve. In the eve we came to know, that he had been doing penance by keeping his mouth shut.

After an hour's waiting at last Sir Charles began writing, which ran as follows: "Leaflets distributed. Effects magical. The Sher's house is being stormed by the public. We are landing our men. Further orders awaited."

"So" said Sir Charles "within half an hour's time the Sher will be here."

"I think so" I replied and then kept quiet.

Suddenly we heard a big row in the streets. Why? What was this? Could it be that a rebellion had broken out? The Mahatma jumped up, when he heard the tumult. Putting his ear to the door he listened, but his effort proved fruitless. The row increased, and Sir Charles, smelling some thing foul took a revolver in each hand and stood ready. I and the Mahashae, who had by this time got up followed the the same example. Presently it seemed that men were in the street, opposite to our house. I was not far from right. Some one knocked at the doors. On hearing this the Mahashae turned deathly pale.

"Th—The Sher" he stammered "must have sent his men to arrest us all."

"Now Mahashaejee, don't be foolish" I cried "go and open the door. Our own men wait outside."

At first he hesitated, then gathering courage slowly advanced to the door. He put his hand to the latch, tremblingly like a man who touches a live adder. At last, he shot back the bolts. The door opened and the Mahashae hid himself behind them.

Never in my life had I seen so pleasing a sight. I could not help clapping my hands in glee. There stood a body of His Majesty's soldiers about three hundred or more. They saluted Sir Charles and their captain advanced to where we stood.

"The Sher awaits outside in chains" Sir he said, addressing Sir Charles.

"Alright captain" he replied "now arrange to take complete charge of the city and in the meanwhile, signal home asking for more men at once. Say four or five steam shipfuls will do. Besides ask for plenty of arms and ammunition. Can't say, may have to do fighting too."

The captain saluted and left. Now we walked outside and there stood the Sher in chains before us.

"Traitors" he said as soon as he saw me and Leela. "I will repay you for this in agony and tortures."

Now the soldiers lined themselves before the doors and shouldered their rifles. One of them advanced and suddenly flung open the doors.

To my surprise I noted that no one was standing at the entrance. This was surprising as when a prison is opened, the prisoners always stand ready at the doors to run out. By an after-thought, I realised that somebody may have peeped through the cracks of the doors, and seeing armed soldiers outside, may in terror, have told the others to hide themselves.

"Go in, Captain" ordered Sir Charles to the Captain "and bring out all the foreign delegates, but see that none of those Judges escape."

Obedying the order, the Captain advanced, and in a few minutes the delegates came out. They thanked Sir Charles and myself over and over again. Sir Charles next introduced the Mahatma to them.

"Oh! is he, is he, that great man of India" said they. "well old man, we are very pleased to see you. It seems that innocently you have been toying with a dangerous thing called 'politic affair'. You may be compared with the scientist who invented electricity, and ignorant of its powers, was killed whilst meddling with it. But we are pleased to see you yet alive?"

The Mahatma giggled and laughed while they spoke. Now Sir Charles spoke.

"Gentlemen" said he addressing the delegates "I have made arrangements for your departure in a special train to Bombay. I am sorry duty calls me, otherwise we would have had a hearty dinner together this night. But we shall meet again, at some other favourable time. My guards have instructions to escort you to the station. Of course, you must have understood by now that now England holds India, and therefore the terms and other items will now be settled in England."

"O it matters little, Sir Charles" replied they "we owe you our life and we thank you once again before leaving. We have no terms to settle, where England rules Farewell".

After shaking hands with each, we left the place and walked on. Before leaving Sir Charles ordered his Captain to bring all the Judges in chains to him at the Mahashae's house. We all reached the Mahashae's house.

My senses were reeling. Why? O I had forgotten that I had not eaten anything during the whole day. Not only I, but all of us except, perhaps the Mahatma, had eaten nothing.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DONKEY'S EPISODE.

THE Mahashae's wife had fore-thought this and within five minutes, a grand feast was served. We all sat down to eat, and I marked that the Mahatma huddled himself in the corner instead of sitting down to eat with us.

"Come Mahatmajee" I cried "eat with us."

"I am sorry" replied he, I only take donkey's milk and fruits. I eat not what you eat."

"What? monkey's milk did you say?" I cried.

"No I said donkey" replied he.

"Then Mahatmajee" I cried "it is not good that you starve while I eat. First I shall get your milk, but where on earth will I get donkey's milk? Will not cow's or buffallow's or horse's— I beg your pardon I mean goat's milk serve the purpose?"

"No" replied the Mahatma "curse the Sher. I had brought my donkey along with me, but when he sent me to the prison, it was still standing at his door. O when they led me out, I saw the poor creature faithfully standing there and sorrowfully looking at me. For nine long years it has suckled me like its own babe at it's breast. How I grieve for it! I wish I had it with me by my side."

"Alright Mahatmajee" I replied "first I will go and fetch your donkey from Sher's and then I shall touch food. Excuse me" I said to Sir Charles and was off.

The Sher's house was at no short distance from here and yet I had to go. In the way I came to a washerman's hut, where I saw five or six donkeys tied outside.

"Have you any donkey's milk to sell?" I said poking my head into the room.

"Now off with you" cried a gruff voice "or else you'll come to know what a donkey's kick is like."

I hastily withdrew my head, fearing lest they would strike. I walked on and presently was at the Sher's house.

It was deserted. I walked round, but there was no sign of the donkey there. I walked here and there till I came to the stables and here sure enough, stood the Mahatma's donkey. I took the rope in my hand, and walked homewards.

It was near dusk when I started and by the time I reached home it was dark. I left the donkey outside and went in.

"Here you are, Mahatmajee" I said "your beloved donkey awaits outside, full with the milk of love for you".

"Thank you, thank you" he said getting up. "now where is this *lota* (vessel) of mine" and he groped here and there in the dark.

At length he found it.

"Now let us go and milk it" said he. I followed.

"Ah, my beloved" said he caressing the donkey, but the donkey seemed to be in no good mood. As soon as the Mahatma's hand touched, it snorted and kicked violently.

"Ah dear" said the Mahatma "you must get angry like this with me. I deserve your anger. Poor soul! you must have starved the whole day, in that wretched house of the Sher."

At his words the donkey seemed to be somewhat pacified. The Mahatma sat down, and taking the vessel in one hand, wanted to milk the donkey with the other. He fumbled for a while in the dark then muttered to himself "why is it changed? what is wrong?" and he made another attempt, but it seemed he could not succeed in the dark.

"Mahatmajee" I asked presently "anything wrong?"

"No" he said "please bring a light."

I went into the room and fetched the lamp. I showed the light to the Mahatma, while he was at his work. Why? what was he doing? He first of all looked steadily then took off his spectacles and looked again. Now he got up and walked round the animal till he came to the other side, and finally came back to the place, from where he had started. He then stood up and scratched his head, as though he could not understand something. Then suddenly, it seemed, something came into his mind.

"This is not my donkey" he said "what do you mean by thus insulting me. I demand an explanation from you Mr. P—. Because I am thus fallen and in this plight, you want to thus mock and fool me" and he stared at me with fierce eyes, through his spectacles.

Now I understood my mistake. I had innocently brought another donkey, instead of his own. But where was my fault? Did I have the ghost of an idea that there would be another donkey in the Sher's house? I respected the Mahatma, and had no intention whatever to make a joke of him, or to fool him in any way. I felt so ashamed of myself that I wished the earth would open under my feet and swallow me.

"I beg your pardon, Mahatmajee "I said "I am so sorry However, I shall go and search again, and get your proper kind of donkey, not till then will I touch food." Off I went once again.

In the way, I met a fisherman carrying a load of fishes on a donkey.

"Kind sir" I accosted him "have you any donkey's milk to sell? I require about two pounds, for medical purpose. and you know, I will pay you a fancy price too."

"How much" he asked.

"I will pay you even five Swarajis for two pounds."

"Agreed" said he "now bring the vessel here."

‘I have no vessel, please give me yours, I will pay for it’
I cried.

‘Now, that will cost you another two Swarajis’ he replied.

‘Agreed’ I replied.

Then taking the vessel, he sat down to milk the donkey. He was about to begin, when I stopped him.

“Wait” I said “are you sure that it is the right kind of donkey you have here. The Mahatma will not drink the milk of a wrong kind of donkey.”

The fisherman seemed perplexed; then catching the point he said “Yes it is the right kind” and began milking.

When the vessel was full, he gave it to me. I paid him and was off.

In the way, I met a procession. I stopped to look at it. Each man carried a torch in his hand. In the middle of the procession walked a man in chains. It was the Sher. I recognised him. I went up to one of the leaders, and asked, where they were going to.

“We are going to do justice. to the Sher. Come, brother, with us, and see justice taking its course.”

“Alright” I said and began walking with them. In a few minutes we came to an open piece of land.

Here the procession stopped. I noticed that a deep pit had been dug, just near a small brook which was flow-

ing across the plain. The men arranged themselves in a circle and the Sher was left standing in the centre. One of the members advanced and took up his position near the Sher.

"This is the man" cried he in a loud voice pointing at the Sher "who has cruelly murdered our saint and philosopher Sir Ratindranath Tabore. Further he has spoiled and polluted the Hindu religion. He has defiled the temples and killed or converted the votaries by force. Therefore, according to his deeds, we, the leaders of the Hindu religion, have decided to kill him in the same painful manner, as he killed our saint. Has anyone got any objection?"

He ceased speaking and the others cried with one voice "we have no objection. Justice must have its course."

"Then come, help me to do justice" cried the first speaker, whereupon ten or twelve men rushed up and tied the Sher's hands and legs. Then they carried him to the pit and let him in. When his feet touched the ground in the pit, his neck was in level with the ground.

"Now bring in the stones" shouted someone.

The members rushed off and were back soon with big pieces of blackish white stone in their hands. These

stones, they threw into the pit, so that the Sher was surrounded on all sides by these stones up to his neck.

I wondered what could be the meaning of this. Possibly they wanted him to die of starvation slowly in the pit. All the members withdrew and only one man remained by the pit.

He sat on the ground near the brook and slowly drew a deep line in the soft mud with his finger. The water followed along this line, which had been extended to the pit.

Yes! I could hear the water dripping into the pit. But what was this second sound I heard? It was a slow hissing sound, like the hiss of a tropical snake.

A sudden howl pierced the still of night. It was the Sher. Why? What was wrong with him? I looked and saw steam coming out of his pit. In a moment I understood. The pit had been filled with quick lime. So the Sher was to die a horrible death. The quick lime acting with the water would produce terrible heat and so he would be slowly burnt to death.

He howled and screamed in agony and yet no one took pity on him; on the contrary I heard someone remarking "Traitor, learn what it is to be a cursed Muslim. You people seem to think that we Hindoos are dead. Learn now how sweet is death."

I could not endure the sight any longer and so I walked on. On the way I wondered how long this strife for supremacy would continue between the Hindoos and the Mahomedans. Surely India could never dream of having its Government even in a million years, as long as there were these two castes. Thus engrossed in these thoughts I soon found myself at the doors of the Mahashae's house.

The Mahatma was sitting on the steps, his chin resting on his hand.

"Who is it?" he asked me, when I approached.

"It is I Mahatmajee" I replied. "I bring your milk. I could not find your donkey and so I purchased the milk elsewhere and brought it to you."

"Oh thank—thank you" he said "but, are you sure this is the milk from the proper kind of donkey. If not I refuse to take it."

"It is" I said, and then went into the room. All were waiting for me. My food was ready and I fell to it ravenously. When I finished, I spoke to Sir Charles.

"Are you ready for sleep now, Sir?" I asked.

"Oh no" he replied "duty first, sleep afterwards. Those fellows, I mean the Judges and Governors of India, are waiting our pleasure, in chains at the back of our house. I have to attend to them first."

"And what do you intend doing with them?" I asked.

“ Why, nothing ” he replied “ simply note their names and addresses and let them off. These chaps can't do anything. Even if they could, the public would never listen to them, they are so terrified at the turn of events.”

He left the room and I followed him. We were soon outside and now I saw the Judges and Governors, standing in chains before us. Yes, I counted thirteen of them. On seeing us they bowed low, to the very ground. While in this posture, each picked up a handful of dust and when they stood up again they poured this dust on their heads as a mark of submission. Sir Charles laughed, when he saw this and remarked to me “ They have learnt now *that when the strong command submission is best.*”

“ Yes ” I replied “ but please be kind to them ”.

Sir Charles next took a pencil and paper and wrote down the name and address of each. The list being made, was handed over to me. I read, in the following order: 1. Bandit Jalal Niroo 2. Sarauglini Widow 3. Bandit Madam Bone Malaya 4. Jinner. 5. Dholana Sookata-Li. 6. Maulana Phoon Phas. 7. Pateli. 8. Pettelo. 9. Bhai Labhoo Ram 10. Dubash Chandra Ghost. 11. Jem Gupta. 12. Jariman. 13. Phunsi.

“ Now ” said Sir Charles “ I will leave you off, if you promise to be of good behaviour. If you are brought to

me the next time for any reason whatsoever, beware, for I shall show no mercy. Now you may go."

The guards removed the chains and each leader came and gave the required promise. After it was over, yet they would not go.

"Now, what do you want?" asked Sir Charles.

"Only this" replied one of them "that you give back to us the person of our Mahatma. We worship him as a saint and would not be happy without him."

"It is a lie" burst out Sir Charles "he is not a prisoner at all. If he wishes you may take him away with you. "Here old man," he shouted, turning towards the house "Come out. These fellows want you."

The Mahatma, came and stood at the door. All present, bowed low as a mark of respect.

"I am willing to come with you. " said the Mahatma and after wishing me and the Mahashae began walking with them.

"I say" remarked Sir Charles to me "I don't quite trust these fellows, with the Mahatma. Did you mark the tone of bitterness, when that fellow uttered the Mahatma's name as a saint."

"Now what do you mean" I asked "I am sure you don't mean to say that they mean him any harm?"

"Yes "replied Sir Charles "that is exactly what I mean".

"No-no" Sir Charles "I replied "dispel all such ideas. He will be quite alright".

"I wish I could be so sure " he said "however, as you say you are sure, I don't mind."

Saying so, he turned round and walked into the room. I followed. Arrangements had been made for sleeping, in our absence, so we quietly lay down and were soon lost in sleep. Early morning, before dawn some one knocked at our door. All of us were out of bed. I rushed to the door and asked "who's that?"

"It is I, Sir, the guard" replied the one outside, "open the door, Sir, a murdered man has been found lying in the streets."

Quickly I opened, the door and the Mahashe brought a light, and all of us passed out. There right in front of us stood five or six of our soldiers and oh ye Gods; who was this man lying stark on the ground and all red in blood? Was I dreaming or seeing aright? Who else could be dressed in a lion-cloth, but the Mahatma? As sure as the blue moon rises, *it was the Mahatma*. But what brought him to this fate? There was only one answer and I thought of Sir Charles' words. I knew it was my mistake, but again where was my fault? Who could for one

moment believe, that the people were so treacherous, as to kill one, whom they worshipped, thus in cold blood! I remember even to this day, when fully awake that it is the only one mistake I had made, in not listening to Sir Charles' warning. May God forgive me for it. Sir Charles turned to me and said pointing to the Mahatma

"See man, did I not tell you? See, he has been stabbed in the chest and there is the dagger, but what is that piece of paper attached to its hilt. Bring it, let us read. Perchance it may give a clue to the cause of his murder. Of course we know the murderers, but we cannot punish them, because, we have not yet established the laws upto now. This is the first thing to be done to-morrow. However, let us read" and he took the paper, from the soldier's hand, who had brought it along with the dagger.

He read loudly as follows:—

"Justice. This is the fate of the man who misled India. This is the fate of the pilot who boasts of knowing the way, only to drown later on. This is the fate of a man who meddles with politics, only to bring ruin and disaster to the Motherland. Let justice have its of course, toll free. Farewell. The people of India.

Alas! I could not help shedding tears for that great man whose name and fame were world wide, and who was respected and revered by the millions of India.

We were all thunder struck and awe-smitten. We stood mute, each waiting for the other to speak.

At last, thank God, Sir Charles spoke addressing me.

"Now Mr. P....." he said "let us give this poor clay a suitable resting place. No doubt he was a saint. In these two days, I had learned to love him like a brother."

"I quite agree with you, Sir," I replied "he was a great man indeed. But, now let us think of giving him a proper burial."

"No" interrupted Sir Charles "not a burial. He is a Hindoo, and must be burned. I will write to the Captain and he will do the needful".

Sir Charles went into the room and returned in a few minutes, holding a letter in his hand.

"Here" he said, addressing the soldier and holding out the letter "give this to the Captain and tell him to hurry up the matter. It must be all finished before dawn."

The soldier took the letter and saluted. Now four of them bore the remains of the Mahatma on their shoulders and marched away. With a heavy heart, I came back to the room.

"A great loss to India" remarked Sir Charles, and he sat down.

"Indeed" I said.

The day had not dawned and I thought of snatching a pinch of sleep if I could to compose my senses. Soon I fell asleep.

I awoke, to find that the full light of the day was pouring into the chamber. Was it a dream? Or was it true that the Mahatma was no more? I thought and thought of the same thing, till I began to feel very uneasy. What should I do? I should be doing something. I would wake Sir Charles and pass the time in talking. But no--why disturb him. No--I will have it. I'll wake Leela. I went to her side and slowly tapped her on the arm.

She opened her eyes. At first they were dark as though the surroundings found no room in them. Then slowly light entered them and they moved and she laughed.

"Why, beloved what ails you" she asked, caressing me "why do you look so sorrowful? O tell me so that I may share your sorrow. Are we not one? Say, beloved, speak --."

"Leela" I said, "do you not know that the Mahatma is no more? He is dead and by now, but a handful of ashes and charred bones. Do you not grieve for him, who was so good to us?"

"Yes dear" she replied "I am sorry but what is the use of the brooding over the matter? By our doing -"

he cannot come back to life. All have to die and one day I and even you will have to follow the same path. Therefore, cheer up, and forget the matter."

Her words seemed to give some relief to my aching heart and I looked up to her face. A ray of hope crept into my heart, and I smiled.

"Come now" she began again "lie here. Rest your head on my bosom and I will lull you to sleep. If you desire any thing tell me and I shall get it. Tell me to crown you the king of India and I will do it. Tell me to destroy India and your wish will be granted. Ask — ask anything you want."

I lay down, my head resting on her breast. My heart was comforted and I got peace of mind once again, for who is the man who does not find rest in a woman's bosom? a woman, who is all his own and who serves but as his hand maiden for life.

See what a wonderful thing is this woman. Man, go where thou wilt. Go here — go there, yet woman leads thee. Of her thou art born and to her thou goest. She is thy slave yet holds thee captive. She is endless as the ocean and changable like the heaven, and her name is FATE. At her coming, honour fails, locks open and barriers fall. She can raise thee to heights untold or plunge thee into vallies of unseen depths. Man, strive not to escape from woman. Wherever thou goest she is thy fate, and whatever thou

buldest, thou buldest it for her. Great indeed must be the man who can defy the powers of woman. Woman in her weakness is the strongest force on earth. She is the beginning of all things human; she comes in many shapes and knocks at many doors; she is alert and patient and her passion is governable, unlike to man. She has a commander's eye, and stout must be that heart, in which she finds no place of vantage. If thy blood beats fast in youth; *she* will cool it and her kisses will not tire. If thou art ambitious; *she* will open thy innermost heart and show thee roads that lead to success. If thou art sick and tired; *she* has comfort in her breast. If thou art fallen; *she* can lift thee up. *She* can do all these things, because Nature ever fights on her side. Thus woman rules the whole world. See, now this Leela learned to love me of her own will and served me faithfully to the end. She was my slave yet all the plans which I made were of her invention. She was comforting and asked no reward except Love, which I gave to her freely and she was content. Such devotion, such sympathy and such love could not be bought for any amount of gold in this world.

Now to continue with the story, I rested on Leela's breast and fell asleep. After about an elapse of two hours or so; some one touched me on the shoulder. It was the Mahashae. He pointed to the sun, showing its position in the sky.

I jumped up abashed to be caught in such a position. Sir Charles was already up and sat smoking on his bed.

"Good morning, Sir" I said.

"Good afternoon Mr. P —" he replied laughing.

I caught the joke and winked at the Mahashae. After dressing and a hearty meal, I spoke to Sir Charles.

"Now Sir" I said "what do you intened doing?"

Sir Charles laughed and replied "all is done and nothing is lacking. When I got up I received a wireless message saying that five thousand British soldiers had been landed at Bombay and were awaiting orders. I signalled back, commanding them to takk complete charge of the whole of India from North to South and East to West. The planes which brought them, would distribute them to the various provinces. Then I made arrangements to have the laws proclaimed. So practicully speaking, all is settled now. We have a firm hold on India. However, I will not go home for another week or so."

"and then Sir Charles" I asked "will you leave us? O I would be so sorry to leave your company".

"No no" he replied "you and Madamoiselle, both go with me to England. Do you think I would forget you after all what you have done for me?"

"and you will leave me here to die the death of a dog" asked the Mahashae eagerly, "take me, as your servant, even your slave."

"Mahashaeji" I cried "we wont forget you, rest assured. On hearing this he jumped up in glee and clapped his hands like a child.

"Oh I will see *Valait*—that beautifull country where the Sahibs come from."

I too was pleased at the idea, but to let Sir Charles leave India without doing something for him, was not agreeable to me. So I addressed Sir Charles.

"Sir" I said "could you grant me a favour?"

"Yes" he replied "ask what you want."

"Well" I replied "I wish to go to Delhi for a day. Could you arrange a special train and five hundred men, armed men for me. I intened bringing something rare and valuable for you to carry home. Something which would pay for all the troubles you had in India."

"When do you want to start?" he asked "and is there any harm if I come with you. If not then let us go in 'planes. We would reach within two hours by the direct route."

"I have no objection, Sir" I replied "the quicker we reach the better."

So within the next two hours, we were standing near the tomb of Prithvi Raj, the Great King. I wanted to return from the bowels of the tomb before dark, so I quick-

ly found the mark where, a few days back, I had dug the ground: Now I turned to Sir Charles.

"Do you also come? We have to go right into the tomb. If so get some torch lights and a little bottle of Eau-de-Cologne. The tomb is dark and may be foul smelling due to the corpse of my master."

"Certainly" he said "I would even given my life to see such a rare sight."

I ordered the ground to be dug and soon the stairs came to light. With four entrusted guards, Leela, Sir Charles and myself descended, till we came to the first door. Thank God it was open. We passed through along the passage, and came to the second door. It was pitch dark here so we lighted our torch lights. This door was also open and we passed through it, till we came to the last chamber leading to the King's sleeping room. Presently we stood there and I explained to Sir Charles the meaning of the writing. Sir Charles was wonderstruck, when I finished.

"and how came you to know this secret preserved by generations of the Hindoos, for centuries?" he asked.

"I learnt it from my master who died here" I replied "his body must be here still" and I looked round, but to my surprise the *body was missing*.

A cold sweat burst in upon me and I was scared.

"Now what is wrong " asked Sir Charles "why do you look so frightened?"

I could hardly speak.

"The body——is not where I left it " I cried.

"By Saint Geoge" laughed Sir Charles " because the body is not there, you are so scared. Why, 'tis nothing. Wild animals may have found entrance to this tomb and eaten it."

This suggestion dissolved my fears, and I became myself once again.

"Then let us hurry out of the tomb " I cried addressing Sir Charles "the need of India is great and all the events foretold by the good King Prithvi Raj have come to pass. .Therefore we can safely remove the treasure."

He nodded in assent and I signed to the guards to open the box. My orders were carried out. First they took the box down and placed it on the ground. The lid was next removed and our eyes fell on the remains of the great king Prithvi Raj, which no mortal eyes had beheld for centuries.

See what a thing is company. But a few days back I had dreaded to look at the dead man's face, when alone with my master, and now I boldly looked without the least fear. Next, the body was removed and there as sure as anything lay the priceless treasure, at the bottom of the box With hurried hands the guards took the gems and filled three bags.

"Come" I said to Sir Charles and Leela "that is all. Let us go."

We left that place and shortly we were out in the fresh air once more. It was now fairly dark and we mounted the planes. Of course the bags we kept with us. Now we rose into the air and were flying homewards, to Lahore. Near midnight we sighted some lights in the distance. The engines slowed down and we descended. Once more we were in the Mahashae's house. We took food, slept and nothing fresh happened that night. In the morning I had a long talk with Sir Charles.

"Now, Sir Charles" I said "you may depart. Accept these three bags as a gift from me, to England's king. Pay my respects to His Majesty and offer these as a token of my devotion."

"Nay, not I" said he pointing to himself, "but you yourself must present these personally to the King. You must come to England with me."

"Alright, Sir Charles" I replied "if such is your wish, I agree."

"Then we start to-morrow" he said "get ready."

I nodded in assent. Leela was overjoyed on hearing that I had agreed to go to England. We packed and made ready. The bags containing the gems were given to Sir Charles for safe custody.

Exactly at dawn, the next day, we started our journey to Bombay in 'planes. Before the sun had set, we were on board Sir Charles' ship.

Being tired I went to bed almost immediately, without taking food. At morn I rose and found the ship well out in the sea. I learnt from the Captain, that the ship had been sailing since last evening and that we were now about 150 miles from Bombay. We were all merry on that day and Sir Charles and Leela laughed and joked.

At about three o'clock in the evening the sea suddenly grew rough, a storm threatened and I grew afraid.

I went to the Captain in terror and asked him, if our safety was in any way threatened. He laughed at me and told me that this was a steamship and not a sailing boat. His words somewhat assured me and I stood on the deck to watch the coming of the storm.

The time passed on and it neared sunset. Leela was at my side. At last the storm burst and we encountered a very high wind. Suddenly a great wall of water rose in front of us. It was higher than the masts of our ship and it advanced, at a great speed towards us. I clung to Leela and cried. "Leela we are doomed".

"No" she replied "have courage, dear, it is only but a big wave and our ship will passer *over* it and not *under* it."

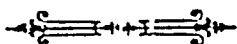
When this wave, as Leela called it, met our ship, it nearly turned on its side and then we were over it. But tons of water had poured in.

I again looked ahead and another wave was ready. We passed over it. It was now pitch dark, but only due to the white foam I could make out yet another wave more terrible and bigger than the previous two advancing towards us. This time the ship could not pass over it, and the hull was buried under the water.

In a moment a billow rushed in upon us and we were clear off our feet. I did not know swimming and I gasped for breath, but it was all useless. I could feel that there were no chances of escape and I knew that I was fast dying. I closed my eyes and thought of the Lord and then came darkness.

BOOK III.

MY AWAKENING.



CHAPTER I.

A SURPRISE.

BUT no ! I could not be dead, for how could I feel that I was alive ? To test this I moved my leg and succeeded. I raised my hand and it yielded. Dead men surely cannot move their legs and hands — surely I must be alive. I thought of opening my eyes, but just then somebody tapped me on the shoulder and said.

"*Sahib utho*" meaning "get up sir," in vernacular.

It might be the Mahashae, or the Mahatma, but it could not be he, because he was already dead and gone.

I opened my eyes, and was surprised. A policeman stood in front of me with a stick in one hand. He was dressed in uniform worn by His Majesty's sepoy in the days before India attained Swaraj. But how could this be ? Possibly the sea waves had thrown me ashore in some foreign land, may be Arabia or Africa. But no ! the man spoke pure Hindustani. I looked to my dress. They were wet and soiled with mud. I look

Why? If I was not mistaken, it was the river Ravi, for, there stood the bridge. I got up, but I was stiff all over the body. Next I ventured a question to the policeman.

"Who are you and where do you want to take me?" I asked.

"I am a policeman" he said "and I want to take you to the *thana* (Police Station).

I was shocked on hearing this; however, I followed. Presently we reached the police station and I was led to a European Inspector, who was on duty.

"Make him sit in that corner" he commanded, addressing the sentry, and pointing at me.

I could not bear this. It was insulting and degrading. The Inspector ought to have given me a chair or at least wished me. Seeing that I was of a high position, it was his duty to do so. I—the friend of a great man like Sir Charles Maxwell. Why? even the Sir respected and loved me, after all that I had done for India and him. The realisation of all these facts, put me into a temper and I went up to the Inspector's table.

"I say" I cried "did you ever learn any manners. You seem to take me as a criminal. You should apologise for your rudeness. Do you know, that I am the man who conquered India for England? and who am a friend of that

great man Sir Charles Maxwell? Yes! Sir Charles, with whom even the King speaks in a friendly manner?"

When I spoke, the Inspector blinked. He was bewildered. Possibly he took me for a mad man for he kept silent.

After a while the telephone bell sounded. The Inspector took up the receiver and this is what I heard.

"Hello! Yes, your brother has been found lying on the banks of the Ravi. He is in my office, if you care to come over and take him. From the description given by you, I think its him."

He put down the receiver, and I wondered about whom he had been talking. Shortly afterwards a car arrived, and a man got down from it and literally ran into the office. After wishing the Inspector he burst out "O where is he?"

The Inspector pointed at me. The man turned his face and O wonder of wonders *it was my brother*.

Yes! After so many years I could recognise him. He rushed to me and embraced me.

"O where had you been" he said "since last morning? Your mother has been weeping all the while. We thought you to be dead. Your smashed bicycle was found in Anarkali, but there were no traces of you".

The news was like a bomb-burst to me. Then all those years, those sufferings. all those travels were nought.

It was a great shock to me, It meant India never got Swaraj. It meant that the British never left India, but the greatest of all shocks it meant I had no Leela. No partner of life to share my sorrows. Of all the griefs, this is the greatest that Leela was not real but a phantom, whose vision even to this day haunts me. Curse the devil for bringing such visions.

"So brother" I asked "was it all a dream?"

"Yes !" he replied "now come along home".

"I'll chew my hat" I cried and sullenly followed.

Finis.

GOD SAVE THE KING EMPEROR.



